

SUMMER BASEBALL SPECIAL

SPORT

JULY 1986/\$2

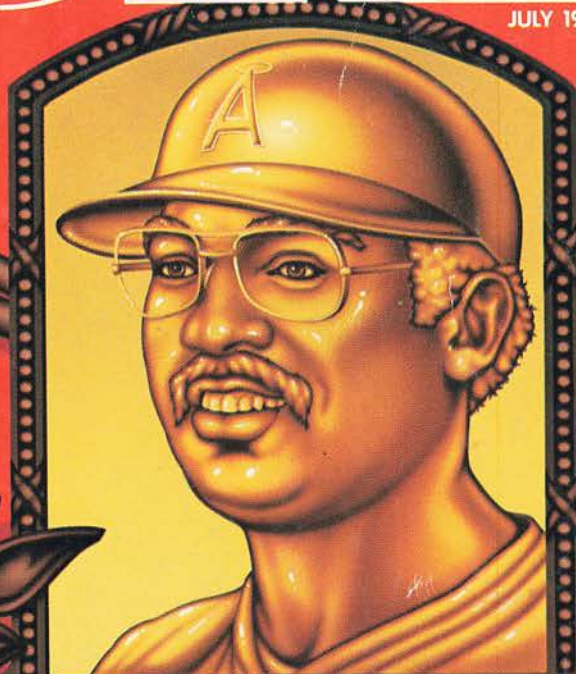
WHO WILL MAKE IT TO THE HALL OF FAME

—AND WHO WON'T

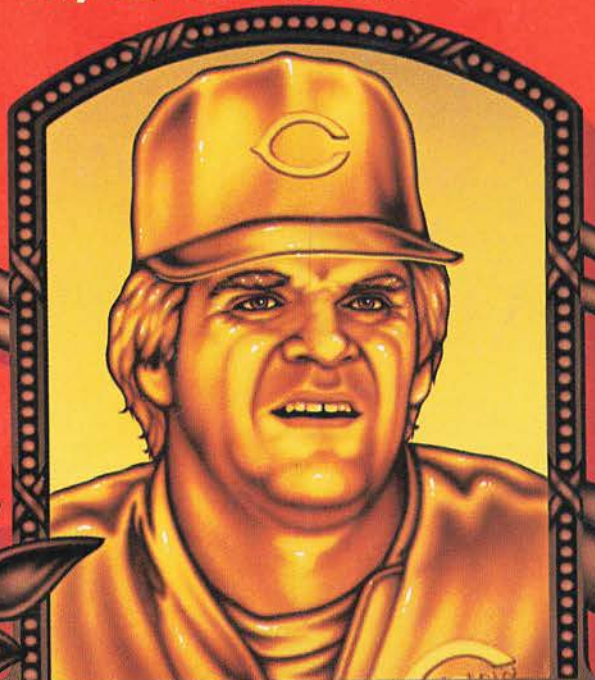
By Bill James

PLUS, AN ALL-BASEBALL LINEUP:

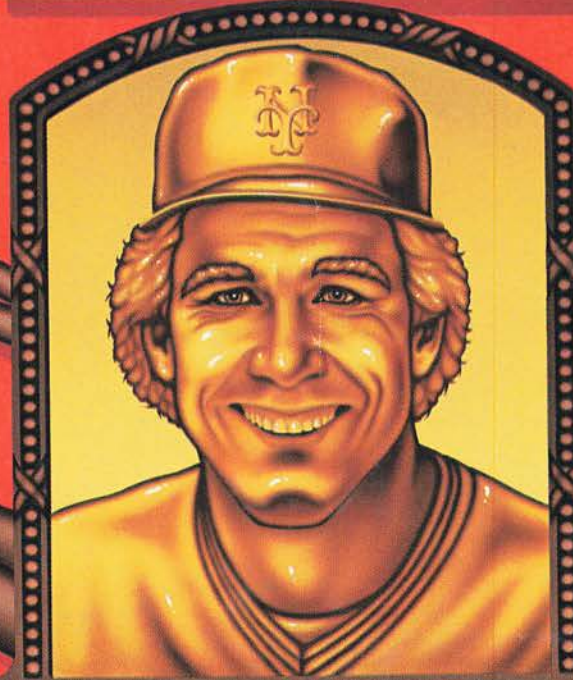
- Fernando Finally Speaks
- What's Wrong with Wade Boggs
- Vince Coleman vs. the Speed Limit
- Mike Schmidt vs. Himself
- Why Can't Pitchers Hit?



REGGIE JACKSON

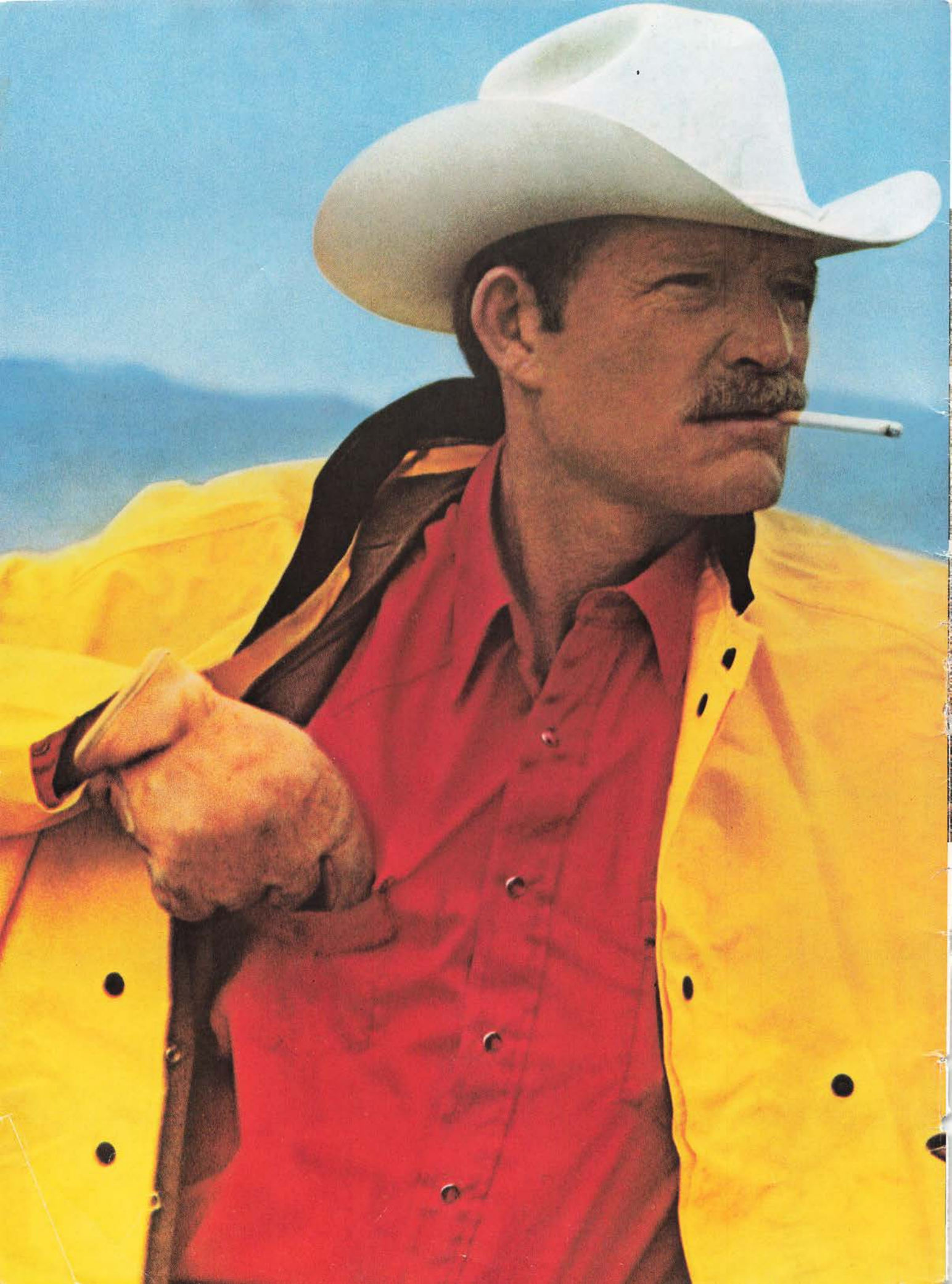


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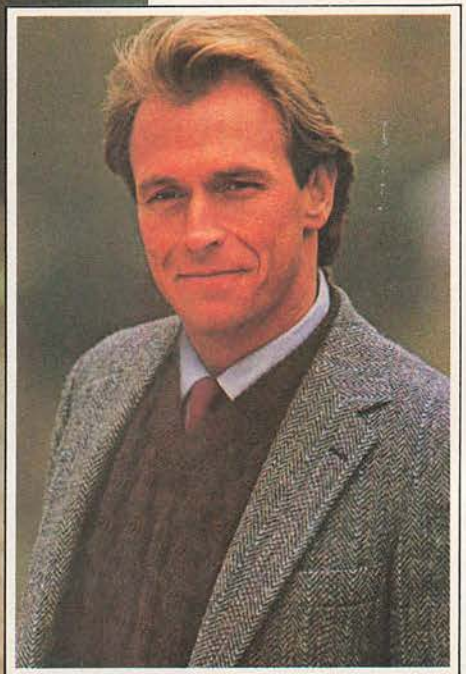
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SUMMER

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Whether you're going to the ballpark or listening to the game on your boom-box at the beach, we've got your summer reading.



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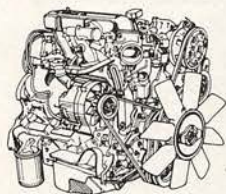
'86 Ranger SuperCab blasts past Toyota Turbo, Nissan King Cab, S-10 Blazer, Suzuki Samurai and Jeep Comanche to win the coveted 4-Wheel & Off-Road award.

Over mountains, beaches, canyons and crags... from Badlands Trail to Big Rocks Road the truck-savvy editors of 4-Wheel & Off-Road magazine drove six top 4x4's through what they called their toughest off-road test ever!

Ford's winning Ranger SuperCab was "... a virtually unstoppable force in the out-back." Proving once again that tough guys finish first!

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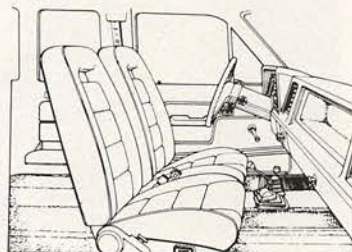
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Special STX trim..

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POLL POSITIONS

I was disappointed with the results of your poll on Hoops Broadcasters (Sport Talk, May). Dick Vitale can be annoying, repetitive and loud, and I'll be the first to admit it. However, I think that Vitale is the best in the business. After watching days and days of basketball, I believe he knows the game, players and coaches like no other commentator. I'm not interested in listening to feeble-minded ex-jocks, or mid-life *GQ* models. Vitale is not good looking, smooth talking or graceful, but he knows and understands the game.

David Kaplan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

I'd guess that only a small percentage of the respondents to the broadcaster poll have had the opportunity to view an entire basketball season on any network besides CBS or NBC. My statement is based on the fact that 64 percent of those polled *did not* vote for ESPN as having the best basketball coverage. Anyone who is fortunate enough to have cable television will tell you that CBS and NBC aren't even in the same league as ESPN when it comes to hoop action.

Marty Flowers
Lincoln, California

All right. Your poll on Hoops Broadcasters has shown what we have all known for years: College basketball is much more enjoyable to watch than the NBA. It's time the NBA used three-man officiating teams and started to call fouls closer. The best team should win the playoffs, not the most brutal.

Randy Singstock
Appleton, Wisconsin

BAD DOG

If I read one more article about how hard Bill Madlock has worked since he has been traded to a contending team, I'm going to be sick ("Glad Dog," May). It's a shame that the Pirates didn't encourage their players to stay in shape in the off-season. It's a greater shame that Madlock, captain of the team and earning over a million dollars, could not

manage a little self-motivation.

Bill Frazier
Chicago, Illinois

It's about time that a player of Bill Madlock's caliber got the recognition that he deserves. If Madlock had been playing on a winning team, he could have been one of the greatest players of the last 20 years. Bill needed to get out of Pittsburgh because over there he had a losing attitude along with the whole team. Bill Madlock deserves someday to be in Cooperstown.

John Lukaszewski
Westminster, California

GOOD BIRD

Steve Marantz's "The Real Larry Bird" (May) excels like the man it explores. Bird is a true star, and he deserves the fine writing that Marantz provides. The sincere blend of appropriate topic with superior presentation left me moved—it was one of the best stories I've read about the best athlete of his sport. Thank you, Steve. Thank you, Larry.

P.L. Thomas
Spartanburg, South Carolina

Not everyone outside of Boston is annoyed by Larry Bird. Bird has got it; go ahead, Larry, and flaunt it. As for the Harlow incident [a reported fist fight] tarnishing his image—I guess I'm small town enough to feel that friends and loyalty are more important than championship titles. Bird's image would only have been tarnished if he had acted otherwise.

Peggy E. Davis
Troy, Montana

I am very displeased with the way the community of French Lick is portrayed in "The Real Larry Bird." Many of the "upper crust" that hang out at the country club are just ordinary working people. As small towns go, the French Lick area is a relatively class-free society. As librarian at Springs Valley High School, I am aware of the dissatisfaction felt by students and fellow faculty members over the image of our town you presented.

Susan Freeman
West Baden, Indiana

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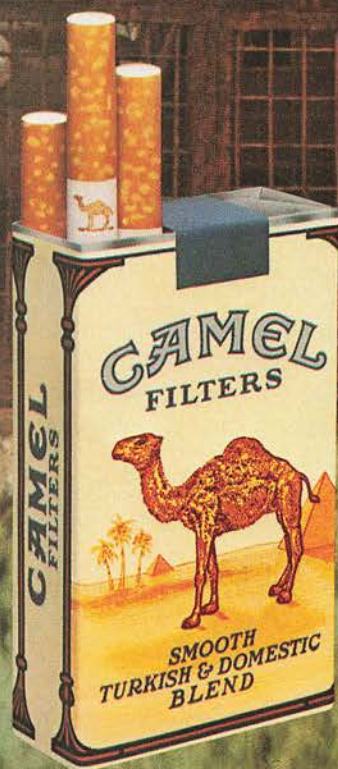
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WOOD BATS: BACK TO THE FUTURE?

The aluminum bat has created as many problems as it has solved since the NCAA approved its use by college teams in 1974. Now, with the help of Major League Baseball, some leagues are going back to wood bats.

The lure of aluminum bats is that they cost less. Johnny Reagan, baseball coach at Murray State in Kentucky and chairman of the NCAA Baseball Committee, used to order a dozen \$10 wood bats every year for each player on his team. Today, his players get one \$50 aluminum bat when they're freshmen, another when they're juniors—a savings of about \$400 per player over their college careers. But pro scouts complain that the responsive aluminum bat skews offen-

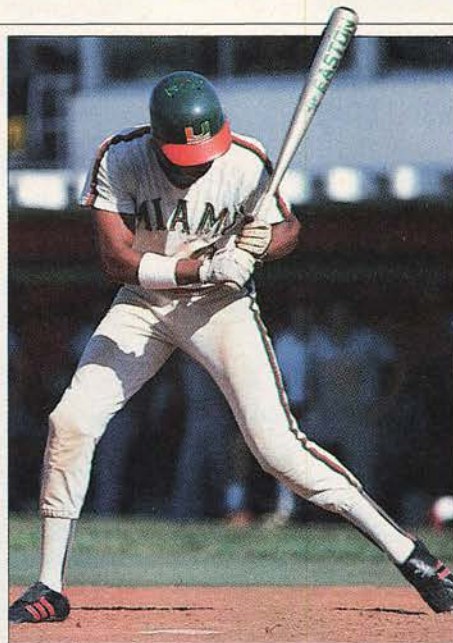
sive statistics, lifting batting averages and home run production.

The Cape Cod League, a summer league for college players, experimented with wood bats during the 1985 season. As expected, offensive production declined dramatically: The league batting average fell 20 points and home runs were off by more than half. For the first time in years, pitchers with an ERA under 3.00 outnumbered hitters with a .300 average. And everybody loved it—not just the scouts but players and fans. "If we're preparing players for the major leagues," says Commissioner Fred Ebbett, "they should be using wood bats. We were doing them a disservice by using aluminum."

The experiment was funded by a \$10,000 supplementary grant from Major League Baseball. This summer, grant money will go to the Valley Baseball League in Virginia. Recently Atlantic Coast Conference coaches voted to require wood bats in

conference games in 1987. "We don't want to take the excitement out of the game," says North Carolina coach Mike Roberts, "but we don't want every youngster hitting 25 home runs either."

One promising solution is a bat made of laminated wood: quarter sections of ash glued together to expose only the durable "edge" grain. Both the Cape Cod and the Valley Baseball Leagues will experiment with a laminated model from Adirondack this summer. Another solution may be the graphite bat, which is durable and flexible and



Metal bats: A disservice to wood-be big leaguers.

sounds like wood. The NCAA Baseball Committee, meeting in July, could approve experiments with graphite for next fall.

FOR SOFTBALL, THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE DOME

Indoor softball was bound to happen. Now, in suburban St. Louis, it has. That's where former minor league infielder Tom Twellman has opened the nation's first "Softball Dome."

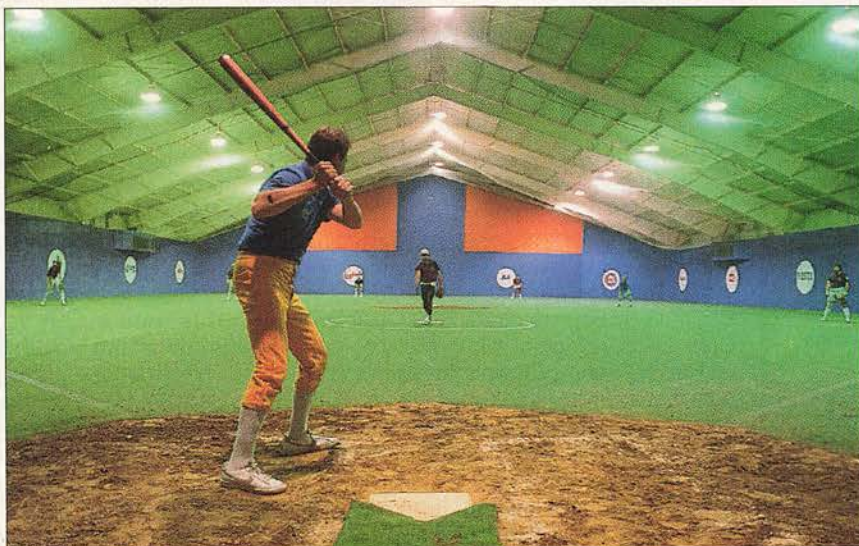
With the tennis boom of the early Seventies gone bust, Twellman converted three of his four indoor tennis courts into indoor soccer arenas. The fourth was turned into a softball palace. The field is shaped like home plate, measuring 90 feet down the foul lines and lengthening to 200 feet in center field. The 12-foot outfield wall is in play, and a second wall, extended by a hanging tarpaulin in center field, is

color-coded for extra-base hits. A net hangs from the peaked roof to deflect pop-ups.

Court fees for the field—which opened at Twellman's Jamestown Sports Complex in Florissant, Missouri, last December—are \$55 per team per game, with games limited to "one hour or seven innings, whichever comes first," says Twellman. All games

are videotaped and, for *apres-play*, there's a lounge next door where games can be screened.

Playing indoors is to softball what the MISL is to soccer: a fast-paced, ball-off-the-wall assembly line of activity, with more than 20 teams traipsing on and off the field from its opening in late afternoon until the lights are dimmed after midnight.



Inside pitch: Picking up where tennis boom left off.

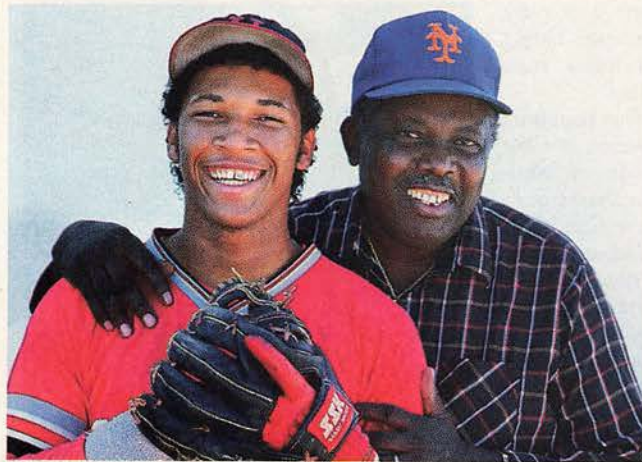
Michael Rainwater, pitcher/manager for the Kenny's Korner Bar team, says indoor softball "is a faster game. You get plenty of hits but not a lot of runs, because your outfielders are bunched up. You get a single and you can't always score from second base."

What started as an idea for winter softball has become so successful during the summer months that Twellman is building a larger, second dome and hopes to open at least three more two-field facilities within the next two years. There has also been interest from enthusiasts in Buffalo, Cleveland, Boston, North Carolina and Indianapolis.

"What we have done," says Twellman, "is create a new game. This is where we feel the future is. Indoors means there's never a rainout, no mosquitoes and always a true bounce on AstroTurf."

DOES GOODEN'S NEPHEW HAVE THE DWIGHT STUFF?

One of the first players likely to be selected in baseball's June amateur



Sheffield (with Dan Gooden): A chip off the old Doc.

draft is a 17-year-old shortstop/pitcher named Gary Sheffield. Scouts rave about his ability the way they gushed over Sheffield's uncle, Dwight Gooden.

This season, Sheffield, who plays for Hillsborough High School (Dwight's alma mater) in Tampa, hit 14 home runs in 22 games, batting at a .500 clip with 30 RBIs. Eighteen of his 29 hits were for extra bases. So feared is Sheffield that pitchers walked him 22 times. His slugging percentage was .985 and he was named all-conference at shortstop for the second straight year.

Sheffield, like his uncle, is soft-spoken and receives the support of Dwight's father, Dan, who attends all of Gary's games. And Sheffield also sports a gold front tooth. But the similarities end there. Because of his stocky build—6-0, 190 pounds and still growing—scouts are projecting him as a third baseman or outfielder. Sheffield has some promise as a pitcher, but it's his offense that gets people talking. "He hits the ball as hard as I've seen any high schooler hit one," says Joe McIlvaine, VP of baseball operations for the Mets.

"I'd rather play every day," says Sheffield, "because on the mound I don't think I'm big enough and

strong enough to get it by those players. I really want to bat because I like to hit."

Sheffield's first exposure to baseball came 12 years ago in Tampa when a precocious nine-year-old Dr. K introduced his nephew to a bat and glove. "Dwight used to hit baseballs to

me on concrete," recalls Sheffield. "He'd get real mad at me when I didn't pick them clean. We'd get into fights all the time. But these days Dwight tells me that the way I swing a bat, I can hit some major league pitches."

Now that Gary's on his way to the big leagues, Dan Gooden will turn his attention to another of Dwight's nephews, Derek Pedro, an outfielder at King High School. Seems the Goodens turn out players the way the Kennedys turn out politicians.

U · P · D · A · T · E

At Wimbledon in 1985, Kevin Curren beat big-serving Stefan Edberg, took out defending champ John McEnroe with astonishing ease and then bushwhacked Jimmy Connors. Curren did everything but win the tournament, which he lost to Boris Becker in four sets.

Going into the 1985 Wimbledon, Curren was among the top 10 players on the tour for the year. After Wimbledon, however, he played only five more tournaments. Curren's left ankle—which his coach, Warren Jacques, says was "ripped to shreds" (actually, severely stretched ligaments)—was so painful that he laid off from October to December. "The second half of 1985 I didn't do worth a dime," Curren recalls.

With his ankles now tightly wrapped, Curren is on the comeback trail, having won the WCT-Atlanta championship in April. Jacques thinks Curren, 28, is "as talented as McEnroe. He's got everything, and he's got big shots. He can drill his serves faster than Becker or Edberg." His serve has deceptive action. "You can't pick it up. You're guessing 80 percent of the time, compared with 30 percent against most players." But Curren has yet to win the big matches, explains Jacques, because he lacks "that hunger, that match toughness. It's a quality you get from grinding out a few tough matches. If he'd won Wimbledon, I don't

think it would have taken seven months for him to get back to where he was." Curren believes his adversity in '85 has made him tougher, improving his chances for a Wimbledon title in '86. "I would say Wimbledon is up for grabs. There's a ton of good players. You've got to be on top of your game at all times."

Curren is gearing up for Wimbledon again, this time in the hope he can stay on top of his game for just one match longer than before.



Is Curren tough enough?

ASK MR. RESEARCH

Only one person in history ever pinch-hit for the legendary Ted Williams. Who was he?

Robert Miedema
Sioux Center, Iowa

The Red Sox were facing the Orioles in Baltimore on September 20, 1960. Outfielder Carroll Hardy pinch-hit when Williams fouled Hector (Skinny) Brown's first pitch off his right foot and was unable to continue in the game. Hardy attempted to bunt the first pitch and popped up to Brown, doubling the runner off first.

Hardy, by the way, pinch-hit for Carl Yastrzemski, on May 31, 1961, against the Yankees in Boston. This time he beat out a

bunt for a base hit. He is also the only man ever to pinch-hit for Yaz.

Hardy played eight years in the bigs with the Indians, Red Sox, Astros and Twins. His career average was .225.

Mr. Miedema has a follow-up question: **Much is said about William Perry's weight. What are his other dimensions?** The Fridge, whose playing weight is 318 pounds, is 6-2. His neck measures 20 inches, his chest 55 inches, his thighs 32 and his waist (are you ready?) is 48.

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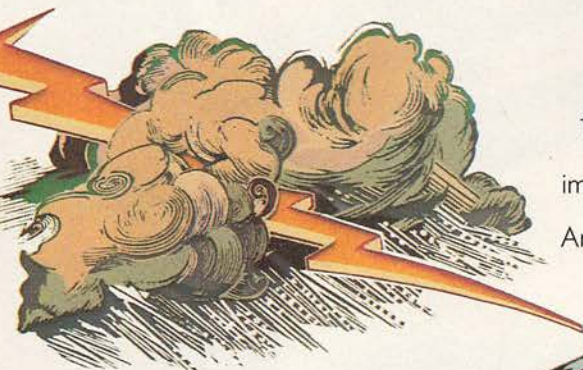
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335562 PRINCE AND THE NEW POWER GENERATION AROUND THE WORLD IN A DAY (PINK PANTHER)	287003 EAGLES 1971-1975 GREATEST HITS (ARISTA)	339317 SAWYER BROWN SHAKIN' (CAPITOL)
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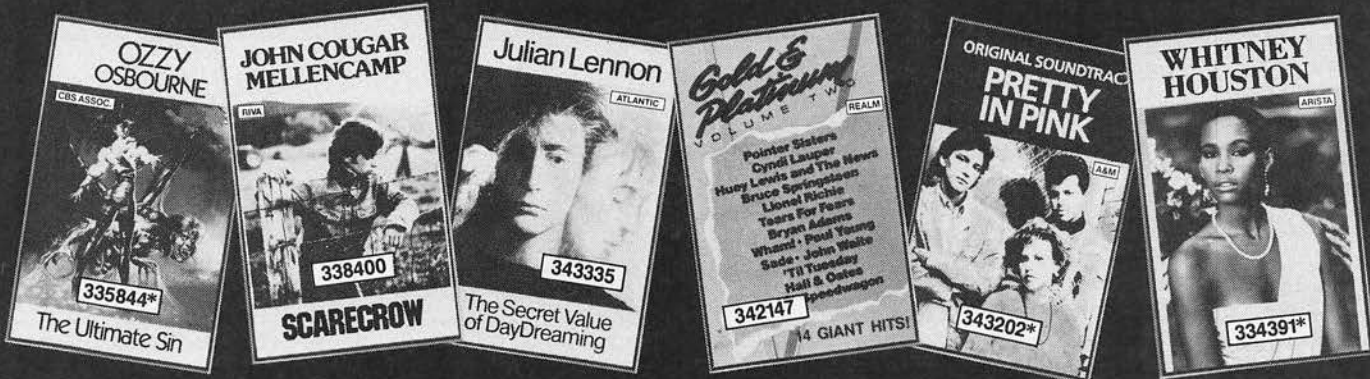
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THE NBA DRAFT: BEYOND THE BIG NAMES

During last year's NBA draft, teams feasted on big men, as 12 centers and 18 power forwards were picked in the first two rounds. This year's draft is loaded with high-scoring forwards (Len Bias, Chuck Person, Kenny Walker and early-entry John Williams) and second guards (Dell Curry, Johnny Dawkins and Ron Harper).

The lack of dominating centers and power forwards makes this year "a sleeper's draft," says Pacers director of player personnel Tom Newell. "There are 30 potential first-rounders and at least 60 players deserving to go in the top two rounds. No matter how late you pick, you should be able to come up with a real good player."

College basketball contributing editor Tom Kertes has done some scouting of his own and has compiled a list of the sleepers GMs hope will wake up their teams.

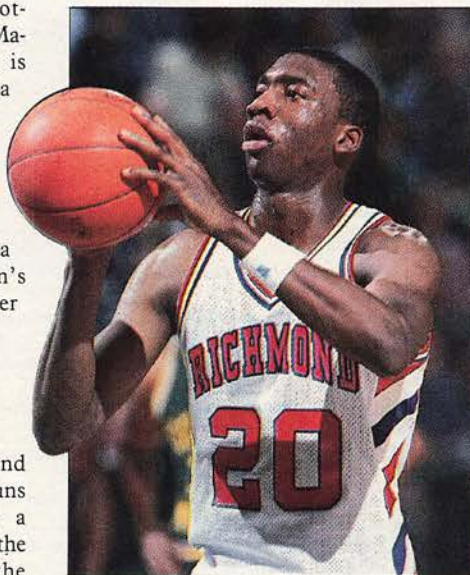
- Otis Smith, 6-5 guard, Jacksonville: Ambidextrous, live-legged, brilliant in most aspects of the game. He could become the

NBA's first shot-blocking guard. Major shortcoming is that he needs a compass to find the hoop.

- Dennis Rodman, 6-8 forward, South-eastern Oklahoma State: Nation's leading rebounder (17.8 per game, 32 in the NAIA semis) could be this year's Carey Scurry—an active athlete around the hoop who runs the floor like a gazelle and wants the NBA dream in the worst way. His outside range is, at best, questionable.

- Brad Sellers, 7-0 center/forward, Ohio State: The MVP of the NIT could become the game's first 7-foot small forward. Among top 10 in the nation in rebounds (12.6 pg) and rejections (2.9 pg). Sellers is also stunning on the perimeter because of his exceptional agility, ballhandling and jumper off the dribble.

- John Brownlee, 6-11 center, Texas: Lacks back-to-the-hoop skills because of all-zone-defense



Newman: Another Jamaal Wilkes?

SWC, but his "catch, step back and shoot" move is much like Jack Sikma's. For a slow guy, he has a quick first step.

- John Newman, 6-7 forward, Richmond: This Jamaal Wilkes play-alike is a spectacular athlete and a prolific scorer. Can face the hoop or post up equally well. Reed-thin body may be a problem.
- Nate McMillan, 6-6 guard, N.C. State: Wolfpack quarterback will move to a "bigger" position (two guard) in the pros. An outstanding penetrator ("He can put the ball down," says Warriors GM Al Attles), Big Mac uses his "invisible" hands to shine as a defensive specialist as well.

- Jesse Phillips, 6-3 guard, Auburn-Montgomery: NAIA unknown impressive at Portsmouth with NBA moves and a perfectly formed perimeter shot. Must strengthen upper body to gain quickness.

- Forrest McKenzie, 6-7 guard, Loyola (California): This Forrest will be seen even among NBA trees. College swingman will be a huge, hugely successful pro guard because of his great court vision and that can't-teach knack for getting his shot off anytime he wants to.

- Maurice Martin, 6-6 guard, St. Joseph's: Ready or not, here's the next Micheal Ray Richardson—at least on the floor. The scouts love his super size, deceiving quickness, improving shot and ESP for the passing lanes.

THE OVERRATED: THREE PICKS TO PASS ON

Naturally, some NBA teams will use their first-round pick for big men, despite the shortage of such quality players. Here are three players who will probably go in the first round but shouldn't.

- Brad Daugherty, 7-0 center, North Carolina: Coaches and scouts have criticized Bill Cartwright of the Knicks for his passive attitude toward rebounds. So in the wacky world of NBA drafting, it makes perfect sense that nonbattling Brad—a poor man's Cartwright—would be considered as a top pick.

- Tim Kempton, 6-9 center, Notre Dame: Al McGuire has been touting Tim as "a guy who'll stick as a backup center somewhere in the league," but he hasn't mentioned which league. The painfully slow Kempton would be anonymous if not for the media-beloved school he played for.

- Kenny Gattison, 6-8 power forward, Old Dominion: *The Sporting News* rated him in the

THE SUPER SLEEPER: ANDRE TURNER

Some NBA insiders believe the Spud Webb phenomenon is, in the words of one, "A once in a lifetime thing, a fluke." Others, like Al Attles of Golden State and Knicks chief scout Dick McGuire, contend that "Spud's success has opened the door for little guys in the NBA." Andre Turner, the 5-10 point guard from Memphis State, will burst through that door this season.

Turner is a pene-

No small potato.

trator with surgical court vision and superb defensive instincts. He plays with an Isiah Thomas glow that will put fannies in the seats. His best games are against the best teams; his 20-point, 9-assist, 7-steal effort came against a Kansas squad that had four potential pros on the floor. And he shines at crunch time, as

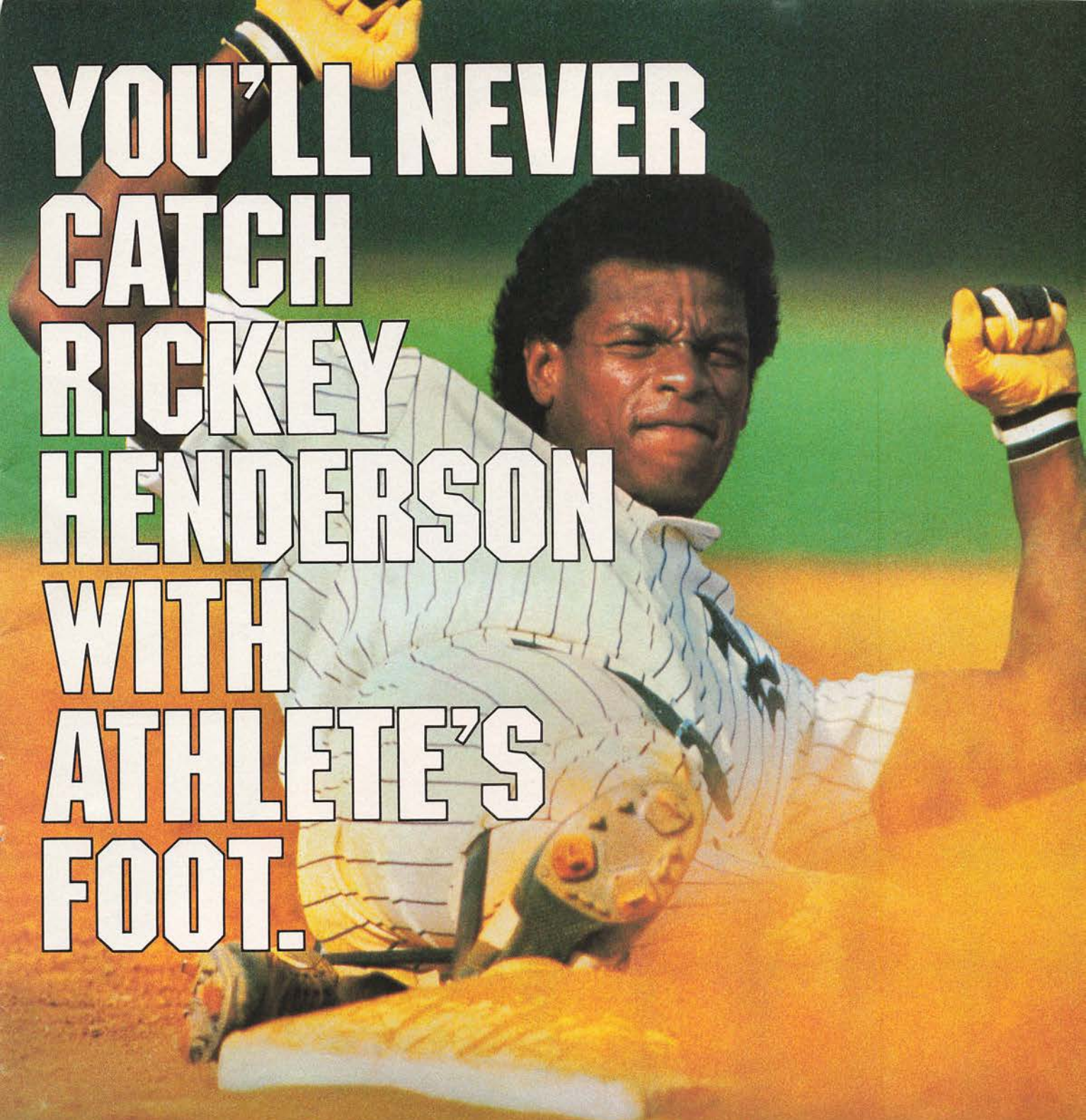
witnessed by his consecutive last-second, game-winning shots in the 1985 NCAs.

Of course, Turner's success will depend on which team drafts him; even Spud Webb was cut by the Pistons before assuming folk-hero status with the Hawks. But with the right team, Turner could be the NBA's next Little Giant.



Daugherty: Poor-man's Mr. Bill.

preseason as the second-best power forward in the country. They were off by about 10. "Gat" can certainly get the ball around the basket, but he needs to learn the most basic skills if he's to have a pro career.



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FERNANDO VALENZUELA

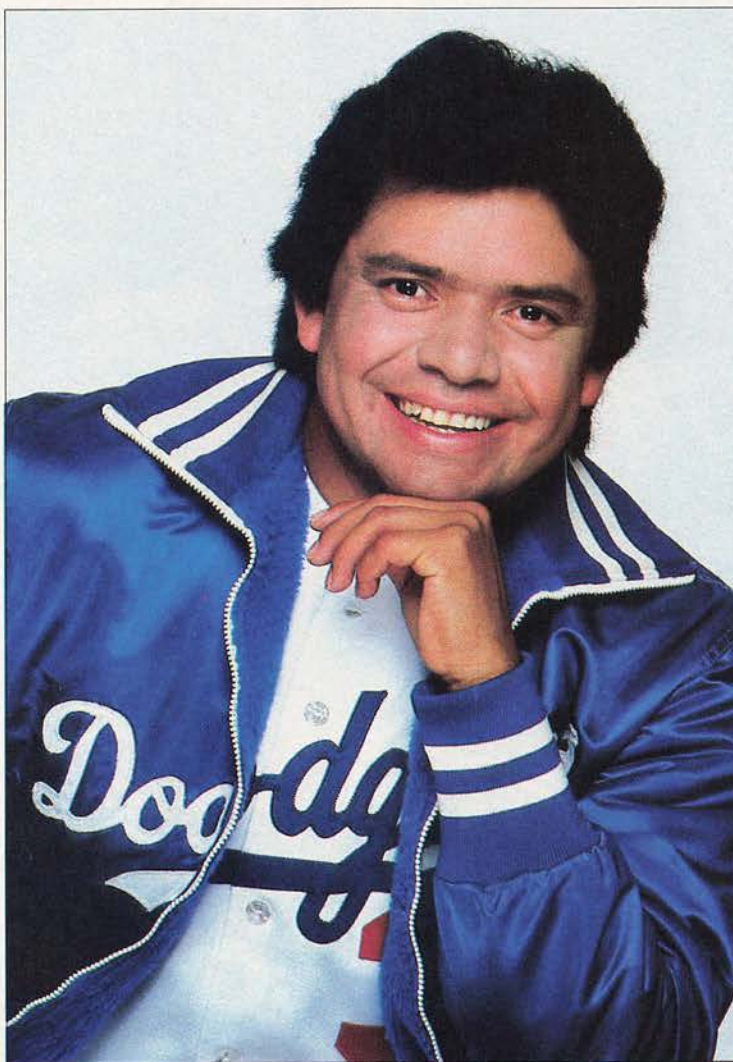
When he isn't called quiet or enigmatic or wiser than his years, he is called inscrutable. Well, no more. Meet the scrutable Valenzuela.

It has been a lifetime of transitions for Fernando Valenzuela. The journey has taken him from poverty on a small farm outside Sonora, Mexico, to wealth and fame in the major leagues. By the time he was 20, he had landed in a condominium in downtown Los Angeles and now, at 25, in a new house in the suburbs with his own growing family.

Through it all, Valenzuela has maintained a certain serenity on and off the field, even as he battled his way through major league lineups, culture shock, the English language and contract talks with the Dodgers—a team few players dare to challenge.

He has found time as well to have an impact on the record books. In 1981, he became the first player to win both the Rookie of the Year award and the Cy Young Award in the same season. Over the last five years he has the best ERA in baseball (2.89) and the second-most strikeouts (1,032, just 34 shy of Mario Soto). He ranks third in victories over that period, tied with Ron Guidry at 78. Despite all that—plus four appearances on the National League All-Star team—Valenzuela has never won 20 games in a season.

He signed his first \$1-million contract in 1983, and this spring he finally signed a multiple-year deal, which will pay him



\$5.5 million over this and the next two seasons.

Now in his sixth full year, Fernando maintains a stoic attitude toward the game and remains something of a puzzle as a personality. He has become comfortable speaking everyday English, but we asked to speak with him in Spanish in the hope that removing the language barrier might remove other barriers as well. He spoke warmly and easily and we have translated the discussion here.

We began the conversation in one of Valenzuela's favorite places: the home

dugout at Dodger Stadium. The ballpark was still except for the hum of a lawnmower in the distance.

SPORT: You are known for your coolness on the mound. Are you really that calm during a game?

VALENZUELA: Once on the mound, I'm deep into the game. That may translate to "coolness," although I'm very anxious before each game. I can't wait to get started, which is probably something that happens to most pitchers, but once the game begins, everything seems to fall into place.

SPORT: What about off the mound? You have been a guest of President Reagan and Mexican president Miguel de la Madrid. Your games are televised directly to Mexico. Do you feel added pressure representing a country through your work?

VALENZUELA: I wouldn't call it pressure but a privilege. The only problem has been people who lack knowledge of the game and expect you to win every outing. The real fan knows that it's much easier to lose than to win, and can appreciate what you're able to accomplish.

SPORT: You have purchased a home in L.A. Does that mean that once your career is over you will live in the U.S.?

VALENZUELA: My life is not in the United States. I'm basically a family man and the family is mostly in Mexico. Since it would be practically impossible to bring them all here, it is easier for me to go to Mexico. It would be very hard for



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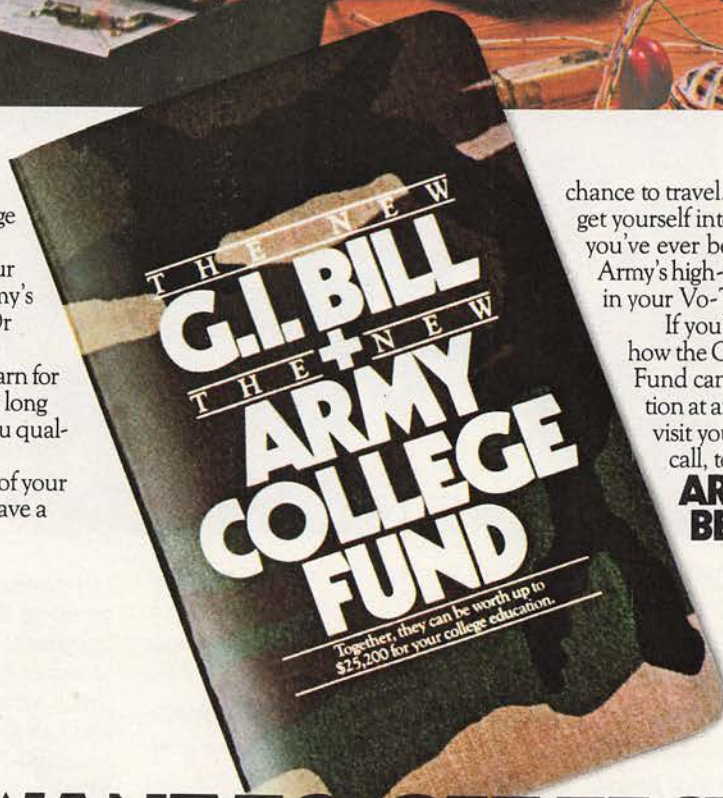
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me to adapt my life away from Mexico.

SPORT: Is that because of cultural differences?

VALENZUELA: Nothing of that nature. Living in Los Angeles with such a large Mexican population is very similar to living in Mexico. Guadalajara is nice, Mexico City is nice, but even there, it's not the cities that matter, or the culture; it's just living close to the family.

SPORT: How do you rate the pro game in Mexico?

VALENZUELA: Strong. I would classify it as a good Triple A level, especially with the foreign talent from the United States, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic and many other Latin American countries playing alongside the local talent.

SPORT: Tell me about your experience in Mexican baseball?

VALENZUELA: I started playing amateur ball in Sonora, and once I signed as a pro, I played for about four and a half years. I was playing for Yucatan in 1979 when my contract was sold to the Dodger organization. At that point, I thought, well, here's an opportunity to see the difference between "their" baseball and ours.

SPORT: Did you know that your contract was for sale?

VALENZUELA: I was the last person to know about it. The first obstacle for Mexican players is getting permission to leave to play in the United States. With year-round baseball there, every team wants to make the most use of its talent. There are extreme pressures from the team owners to have a winning year. If a player excels during a season the last thing his team wants to do is give him up.

SPORT: Once a U.S. team is interested, do teams tend to overprice the player?

VALENZUELA: I couldn't comment on that since I've never negotiated as a player, but one way or another the player is stuck. He has to be negotiated through a team, unlike other countries like the Dominican Republic where a player can be signed from a sandlot without ever going to an affiliated team.

SPORT: As a kid, were you inspired by any particular player?

VALENZUELA: If you mean, did I have any idols, I could mention Hector Espino, a retired slugger who played in Mexico for almost 20 years and who now holds 13 batting titles and most of the batting records down south. He was a great player. Even now I have admiration

"Amidst all the noise of my rookie year I tried to appear ignorant of what was happening. But I was aware of what was going on around me."

for him. He was another player that was caught in the negotiating process between the big leagues and Mexican ball and decided not to play in the U.S.

SPORT: Did you ever relate to major league players?

VALENZUELA: Very little, very little. I'd heard of the great players from the past and of the ones that were making big news. You have to remember that, before, there were very few games transmitted to Mexico, other than the *Game of the Week* or World Series. That made it difficult to keep up.

SPORT: Did your goals change once you put on a Dodger uniform?

VALENZUELA: Not much. At first I never really thought that one day I would reach the major leagues. Once here, I wanted to play and to improve. In 1979, I did get the chance to play in the Instructional League in Arizona [before going to the Texas League in 1980].

SPORT: Was it there your famous screwball was born?

VALENZUELA: Right, Robert [Babo] Castillo taught me how to throw it, and little by little I became familiar with it. By the next season, 1980, it was pretty much under control.

SPORT: Was it difficult to master?

VALENZUELA: It's a very difficult pitch, the hardest thing is to be able to control it. That was what took the longest to master, not so much the movement—that came naturally. It just may be that my arm and my body structure are designed for the pitch. Who knows?

SPORT: What was your strongest pitch before the screwball?

VALENZUELA: My curve. I've had a good sliding curve since I started pitching. The fastball was no more than average at that time, not as strong as now.

SPORT: How did the speed come about?

VALENZUELA: It was developed in the United States, after I trained and played in San Antonio during 1980. Pitching more, getting more confidence and experience at that level, the speed came, while at the same time the control im-

proved on the screwball. That was about the same time that I was called to L.A.

SPORT: Did you know then that you were ready for the big time?

VALENZUELA: [Laughs] I didn't know, but I was ready to find out. That was a much harder notch in my career. I knew that I was going to face the strongest hitters. I kept up

my philosophy: Try to do things better every time and, luckily, things just started going my way.

SPORT: Here was this young Mexican beating the "gringos" at their game. What were your thoughts as the season progressed and you became such a celebrated phenom?

VALENZUELA: All around, people started reacting. In my case, I tried to appear very unconcerned, very naive of what was going on. I didn't want to show a know-it-all attitude. My concern was to concentrate on the game and go on with what I know I do best.

SPORT: Were you surprised by your success?

VALENZUELA: No, I wasn't particularly surprised, since I wasn't a rookie playing ball. I might have been a major league rookie, but not a rookie in professional baseball. By then I was prepared for what was happening, since my pitching in Mexico had been extremely good. Amidst all the noise, I tried to appear ignorant of what was happening. I was aware of what was going on around me, of people saying, "Look at this young kid. He doesn't know what he is accomplishing, he doesn't know the caliber of batters he is facing, the level of the game he is playing." But all that was already familiar. I was coming off a strikeout-record-setting season in the Mexican League and was prepared for that success, very much aware of what was happening day by day.

SPORT: Was the language barrier a problem then?

VALENZUELA: On the contrary, not being able to speak English at that time was a big help. Not being able to talk to all members of the press individually, I didn't have to justify my work on the diamond to every single media member. In a way, that was my protection against an avalanche of people, and a blessing as far as my concentration on the game.

SPORT: Weren't you criticized for your inability to speak English?

VALENZUELA: Yes. The criticism became stronger during the time of the con-

tract negotiations. It seemed sometimes strange to me to get such criticism, when the numbers were right up there for everyone to see.

SPORT: For four years you basically had to negotiate one-year contracts with the Dodgers. Did you feel you had a particularly hard time negotiating?

VALENZUELA: It was difficult, especially in 1982, when I had absolutely no leverage. But I feel that we were able to deal with the situation that year. Neither party agreed to the terms of the contract, and since there was nothing I could do as a second-year player, we took what the team decided to pay. Then on the third year, with the right to arbitration, it was a totally different situation. Throughout the process I was very much aware of what we were doing.

SPORT: Apparently the process did not affect you a great deal. You won 19 games in 1982.

VALENZUELA: Actually, [agent] Tony DeMarco and [lawyer] Dick Moss handled everything. My job was to concentrate on the field, and with my numbers to support their argument, they were able to get the best possible contract. Many people resented a million-dollar contract, but

that is also part of the game.

SPORT: When you say "people," do you mean Anglo-Americans?

VALENZUELA: People in general. I didn't understand why, since we all know that a career can end suddenly. I felt that the best policy was to establish a good salary base in your peak years, especially for a man with a large family, not because of the money per se, but the general need for it.

SPORT: You're on your first long-term contract now, and you had a great start to the season. Has the contract helped your pitching?

VALENZUELA: There will be better concentration, not worrying about next year. That might have helped a little, but I can't attribute my control to a contract.

SPORT: When you signed, did you consider the future prospect of free agency?

VALENZUELA: Well, by the time the contract expires, I'll be 28, with a lot more experience and hopefully with a solid career behind me. Since I had to play as a Dodger anyway, it added up to a two-year contract extension. I can't plan the contract issue that far in advance. Right now, I have to remember that the Dodgers were the ones who gave me the

opportunity to play major league ball. I owe them my full loyalty.

SPORT: Could you see yourself in anything other than a Dodgers uniform?

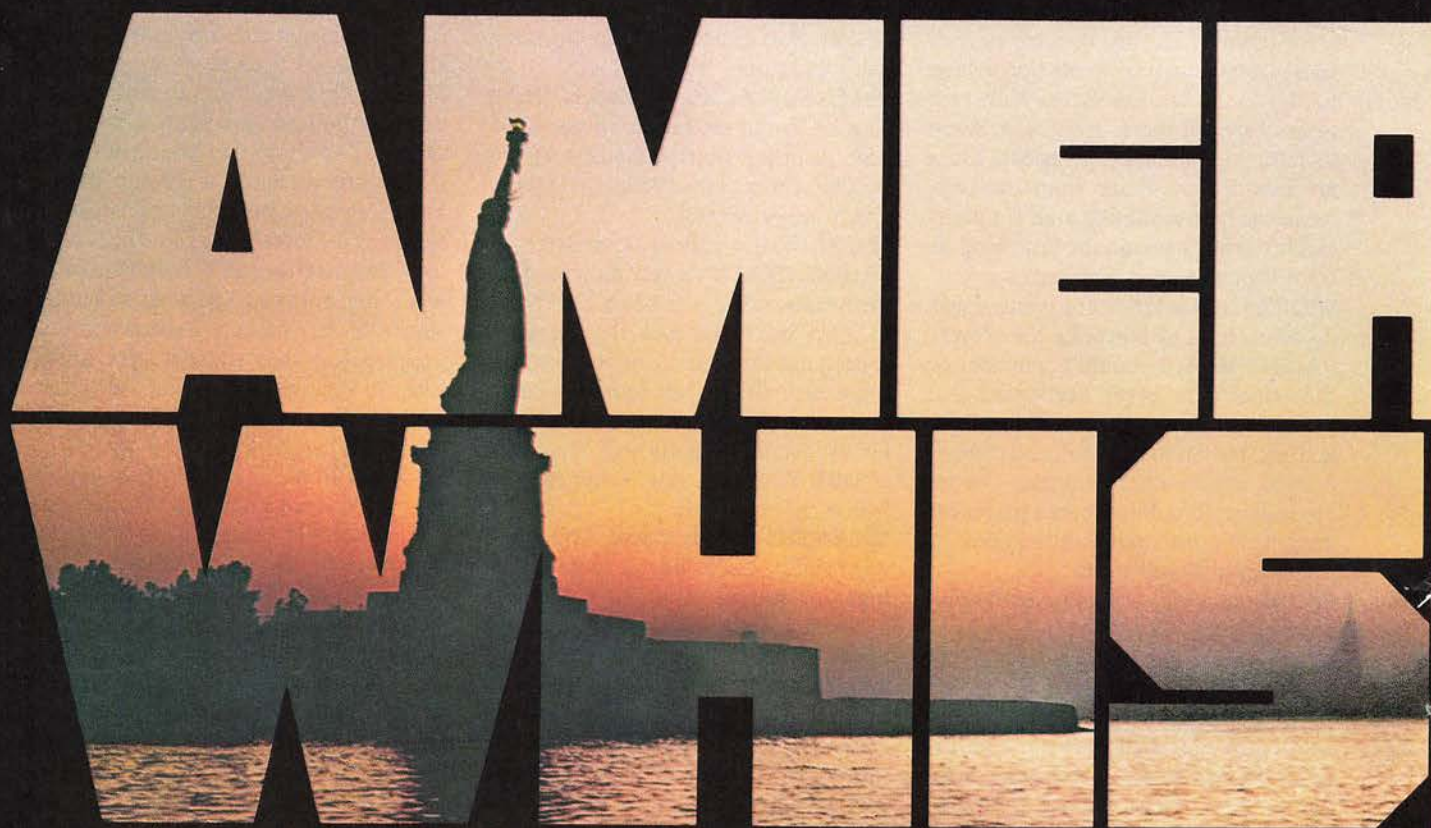
VALENZUELA: When we negotiated our last contract, we looked at all the options. We'll do it again when the time comes, keeping in mind that before anything else, I'm a professional ballplayer.

SPORT: You spoke of "family" when referring to contract negotiations. How do they fit into the picture?

VALENZUELA: One of my goals in life, as a professional player, was to help my parents and my brothers financially, to a large extent I have been able to do it. My first goal was to build a home for my parents and they are already enjoying it in Mexico. I have also pretty much helped my brothers establish themselves. I married Linda at the end of 1981, and now have three kids: Fernando, Ricardo and Linda. With a family that size, your children need room to grow, to run, to make noise. That in general is how the contract money comes into perspective.

SPORT: Has being married been important to your stability as a player?

VALENZUELA: Oh yeah, it has also helped eliminate adverse publicity from



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the bachelor days. I had my share. As a public figure anything you do is news—anything, regardless of how small. It's not as bad now, but I can remember the first year, when if anyone had any space open in a newspaper, they would fill it with a Valenzuela story. True or not, it would get printed. Then having a beer was "a drunk Valenzuela," declining an invitation to a social function became a "Valenzuela lacks community involvement."

SPORT: The biggest question from your critics now is, will this be the season when you win 20 games?

VALENZUELA: It would be very easy for me to say I'll win 20 games. It would be another thing altogether to do it. That will come if it will, I don't like to predict numbers. I try to win as many games as possible. That's it. That's my commitment.

SPORT: Who do you see as the most dangerous hitters?

VALENZUELA: The ones that stand in the batter's box [laughs]. No, honestly, there are some that are very tough, those are the ones who invariably make contact with the ball. Three of them would be Dale Murphy, Bob Horner and Keith Hernandez. If you look at their numbers, Murphy and Horner probably show a

tremendous record against me. Hernandez also. What's strange is that Keith is a lefthanded batter and lefthanders are not supposed to hit lefthanders, but I guess he doesn't realize that and he just hits anyway. There's also Steve Garvey, and Mike Schmidt—there are plenty of people that can make me sweat for an out.

SPORT: Last year, a towel was thrown near Tommy Lasorda after you were pulled from a game. What caused that reaction?

VALENZUELA: There's really not much to tell. I was taken out of a game and, in the heat of the game, I threw a towel against the dugout bench, never realizing that Lasorda was nearby. It came close to hitting him, but everyone realized that the frustration was due to the game and nothing against Lasorda.

SPORT: Do you have a good relationship with Lasorda?

VALENZUELA: There's a very close relationship; he gave me the opportunity and I took advantage of that opportunity. There is mutual respect; I have his confidence as a pitcher, and the results over the years show his ability as a manager.

SPORT: Even so, as the self-appointed "workhorse" for the team, you do show

frustration when pulled from a game.

VALENZUELA: I don't like being pulled from a game. As a pitcher, you like to think that you can do the job on the mound, especially in the close games. There's always a tendency to think that you can stay within reach of the other team and eventually win. After a few minutes on the bench, you realize that the manager is looking after the benefit of the team and you settle down.

SPORT: Has your philosophy changed in this respect as your career goes on?

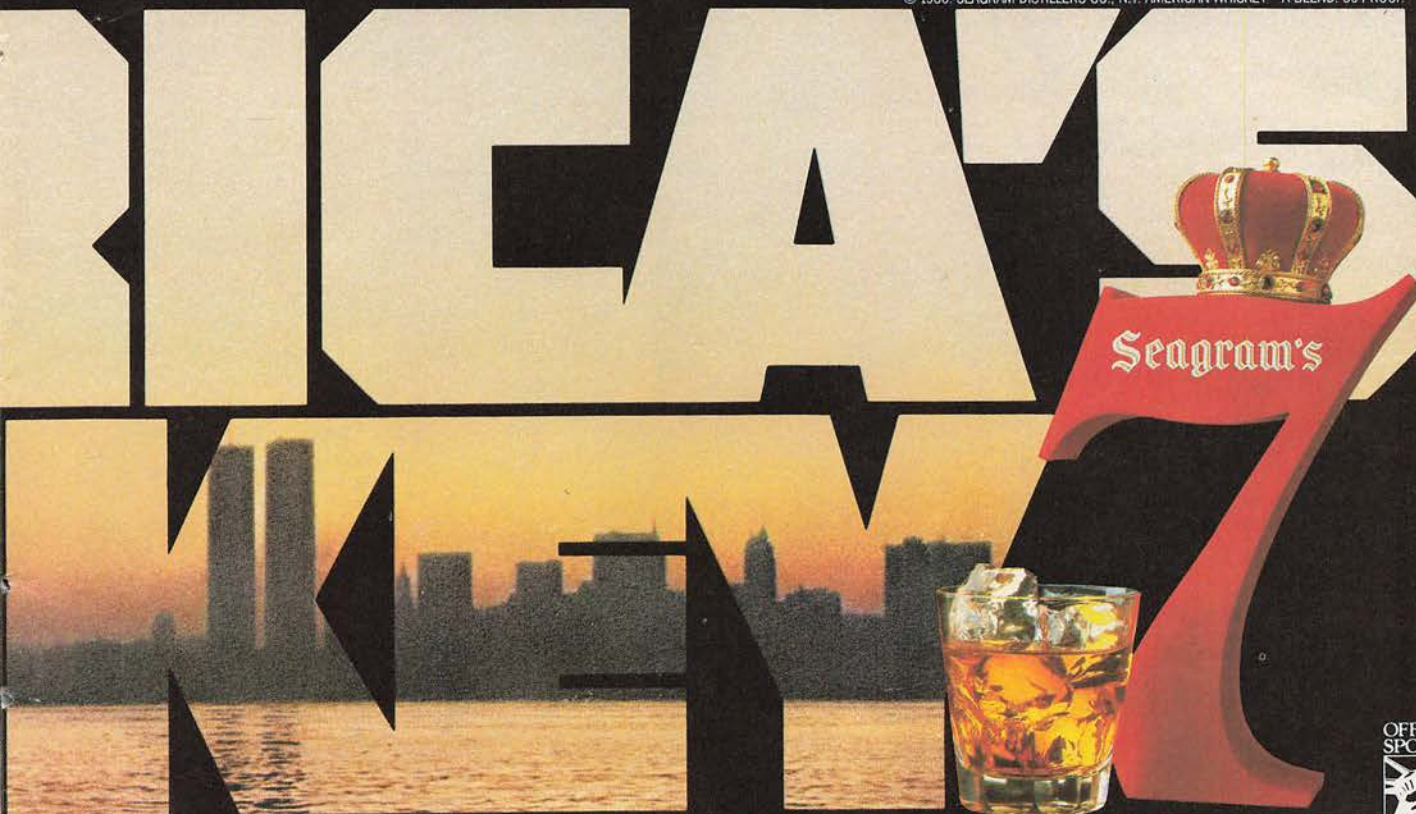
VALENZUELA: No, I like to complete my games. I like to think that I can win games, especially close ones, that I can go the route, that I can take the challenge and win every confrontation.

SPORT: Is that how you see the game, as a confrontation?

VALENZUELA: You have to look at it that way. There's a team against a team, a pitcher against a pitcher, and a batter against a pitcher. In each case there is confrontation, that is what makes the game. That is what keeps it interesting. ★

Fernando Paramo is sports editor of La Opinion, a Spanish-language daily newspaper in Los Angeles.

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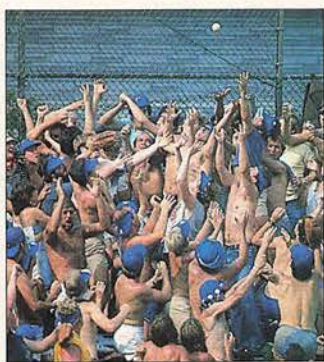
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WHO WILL MAKE THE HALL OF FAME?

CAN PARKER OR RICE OR GOSSAGE MAKE IT TO COOPERSTOWN? CAN RYAN OR CRUZ OR SUTTON OR BOGGS...?



Which active players will go into the Hall of Fame? What kind of combination of accomplishments does it take to assure a berth in the Hall? What are Lou Whitaker's chances of making it into the Hall of Fame?

What we are trying to do here is not decide who *should* go into the Hall of Fame. What we are looking at is who *will*, who is likely to and who is not likely to. This is a "point award" system, so many points for hitting .300, so many points for driving in 100 runs, etc. The more points you have, the better chance you have to get into the Hall of Fame. The system is structured so that a player with more than 100 points can be considered a likely Hall of Famer. The area from 70 to 130 is a gray area; some players who are in there will go in, others will not. Players who fail to reach 70, in general, have very little chance to reach the Hall of Fame, while those who clear 130 can be considered virtually automatic selections. There are exceptions.

I constructed this method by an after-the-fact analysis of voting patterns, combined with a limited amount of intuition to cover things that can't be entirely cleared up by the voting. I wrote down a list of 10 players at each position, shading gradually from the certain, overpoweringly qualified Hall of Famers, the not-quite Hall of Famers and the not-even-close Hall of Famers. Among catchers, for example, I started with Johnny Bench and Yogi Berra and worked down through Rick Ferrell and Ray Schalk, then shifted to Bill Freehan, Johnny Edwards and finally came out at Joe Glenn (a part-time player from the Thirties).

For each player listed, I summarized his accomplishments in a single column, showing how many times he had hit .300,



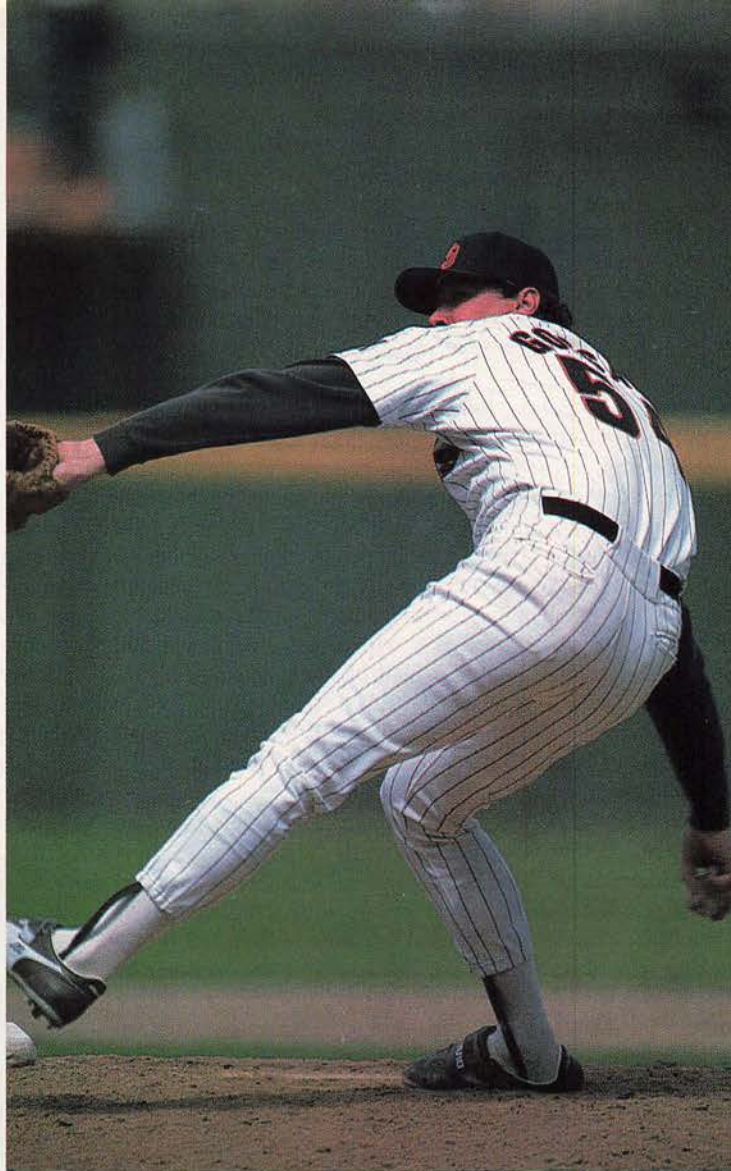
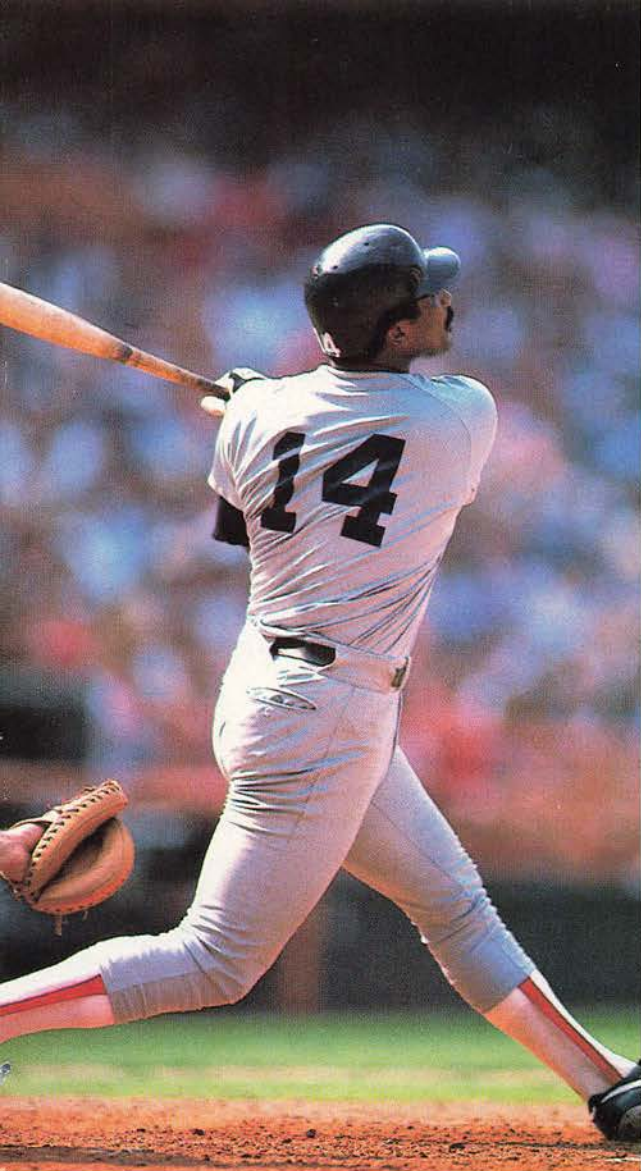
how many MVP awards he had won, how many division, league or world championship teams he had played on, how many times he had led the league in hits, doubles, batting average—about 60 such pieces of information, all together. Some of those seemed to bear a very close relationship to Hall of Fame selection and were given particular significance. For example, among players who play a key defensive position (up the middle, you know), playing on championship teams is clearly very important to Hall of Fame voters. Almost all of the marginal selections there, like Joe Tinker, Earle Combs and Pee Wee Reese, were players who were prominent on perennial champions.

On the other hand, I found that playing on championship teams was not particularly important at the lesser defensive positions, where players are usually evaluated almost exclusively on the basis of their hitting. Another unmistakable bias in the voting is that high-average hitters do much better than low-average power hitters who might actually be better players.

Using observations such as this, I played around with different combinations of point awards, trial and error, until I arrived at a set of values that put most of the players who were in the Hall of Fame over 100, and most of those out of the Hall of Fame under 100.

The system isn't real easy. All the point awards are listed in the box on page 33. You can skip them if you're not into calculations. If you want to figure the status of other players, the easiest way to do it is to place all the categories and point

BY BILL JAMES



awards on a chart, kind of like an IRS 1040 form, and photocopy the form. Use one form for pitchers, one for other players. Managers would require just a real short form.

Before I get into the discussions about specific players, I need to say something about how many players get into the Hall of Fame. I will deal here with 41 players. I will say about most of these players that they have at least a pretty good shot at going into the Hall of Fame. You may think that is too many Hall of Famers from one era, but it isn't. There are over 60 players who were active in the 1925-1930 era who are in the Hall of Fame. Going back just 20 years, there are already 23 players who were active in 1965 who are in the Hall of Fame—and there will probably be at least twice that many in eventually. Those 23 don't include the still-active and recently retired players like Pete Rose, Joe Morgan and Jim Palmer, obvious Hall of Famers. There are many from that era who remain strong candidates in the BBWAA vote, like Billy Williams, Jim Bunning, Catfish Hunter and Roger Maris. And in the long run, it is not the BBWAA, but the Veteran's Committee, that selects the most players. Although it is the Baseball Writer's Association of America vote that gets the attention, *most* of the players in the Hall of Fame are not there by the BBWAA vote but by the Veteran's Committee and the other special committees that are set up to cover those missed in the initial go-round.

There are probably 150 active players who have *some* chance

to make it to the Hall of Fame; I can't deal with all 150 in this article. I don't want to deal with only the best qualified, as this would be repetitious, so I'll select from among the candidates in four groups. The groups are those born in 1947 or before (the old guys), those born 1948-1951 (getting along in years), those born 1952-1955 (still going strong) and those born 1956-1960 (still in their prime). I could consider a few players born after 1960—Gooden, Mattingly, Saberhagen—but that would be very speculative; all I could tell you is that they're going to go if they keep doing the things they've started doing, and they're not if they don't. If you want to know how other players are doing, you have the system.



PLAYERS BORN 1947 OR BEFORE

Pete Rose (308 points, born 1941)

Pete Rose is the most overwhelmingly qualified Hall of Fame candidate among active players. He will probably be the first player to be unanimously elected by the Baseball Writer's Association.

Tom Seaver (234 points, born 1944)

Obviously, Tom Seaver has long since been certain to go into the Hall of Fame. That he remains an effective pitcher having passed 300 career wins and 3,500 strikeouts simply moves him into the Hall of Fame's inner circle. First ballot, automatic.

Steve Carlton (223 points, born 1944)

Yes, Steve Carlton will be voted into the Hall of Fame.

Reggie Jackson (146 points, born 1946)

When Reggie hit home run number 500, it was widely felt that this removed the final doubt about whether or not he would go into the Hall. The Hall of Fame Assessment System saw it the same way; he was close to being a lock before that and is now a certain Hall of Famer. A controversial but inevitable selection, with the odds favoring his entry in the first year of eligibility.

Nolan Ryan (144 points, born 1947)

Another controversial candidate—much like Reggie. While Ryan has been a fine pitcher and is in many ways one of the singularly most remarkable athletes in the game, I personally would not vote for him. However, Hall of Fame voters have always been kind to strikeout pitchers and pitchers who have long careers with records near .500. Ryan is both; he picks up 65 points in the system just for strikeouts. I feel that's a realistic assessment of what those K's will mean, and the 4,000 strikeouts make him a certain Hall of Fame selection.

Phil Niekro (139 points, born 1939)

Niekro will probably have to wait awhile, maybe 10 years, but, like Don Sutton, he is very likely to be voted in.

Rollie Fingers (134 points, born 1946)

The system for evaluating relief pitchers is largely based on an intuitive feel for what things should mean. Because there is only one relief pitcher (Hoyt Wilhelm) in the Hall of Fame, it is not possible to do the same type of study that the analysis at the other positions was based on. Some values are pretty obvious—the World Series appearances will help Rollie, the Most Valuable Player season will help him. Long granted an almost mythic status for his consistent excellence in a demanding role, I would assume, and the system reflects, that he is very near to being an automatic selection.

Don Sutton (119 points, born 1945)

There are no clear guidelines for what is and is not a Hall of Famer, so we are left to define a Hall of Famer in terms of who is in and who is out.

Now, some say that that is the lowest common denominator argument, which is dangerous in as much as it leads to an inevitable downward spiral in the selections, setting as the standard for future selections the worst mistake that has been made in the past. But I'm not saying that *there is a player* who is comparable to Don Sutton who is in the Hall of Fame. I am saying that there is *no* player comparable to Don Sutton who is *not* in the Hall of Fame. *Every* eligible pitcher with a career record comparable to Don Sutton's is in the Hall of Fame; there isn't anybody with anything like 300 wins (in this century) who has been turned down by the Hall of Fame. And it isn't that the Hall of Fame includes *one* pitcher who is *somewhat* less qualified, but rather that it includes *many* pitchers who are *nowhere near* as well qualified.

So Don Sutton is qualified not using the *lowest* common denominator, but using the *highest* common denominator. Every eligible pitcher from this century is in the Hall of Fame if he has more than 250 wins, and that includes Eppa Rixey (266-251), Ted Lyons (260-230), Red Faber (254-212) and Red Ruffing (273-225 with great teams). Sutton is now 295-228. We won't even talk about Waite Hoyt and Herb Pennock.

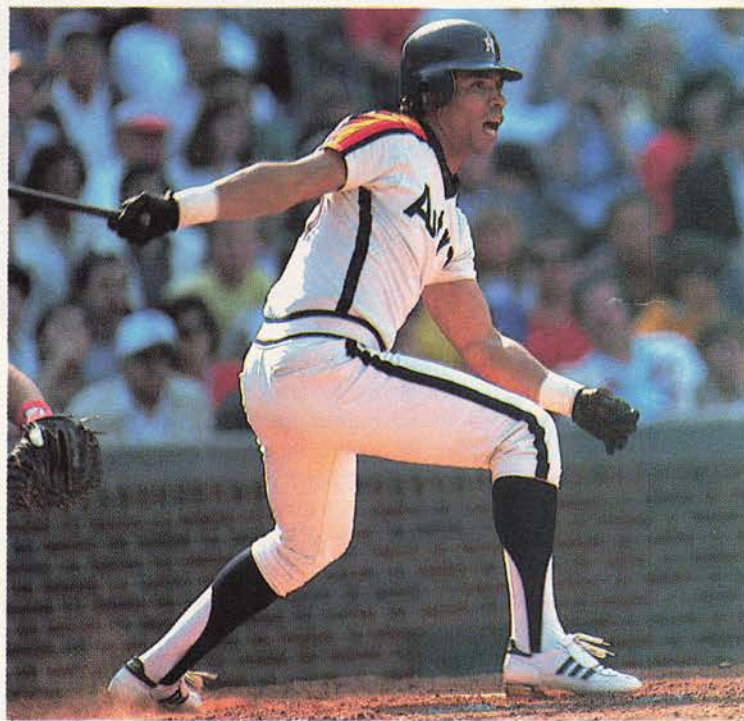
It is not that there is a precedent for putting Don Sutton in the Hall of Fame, but that there is *no* precedent for keeping him out. If you look at the Hall of Fame selections *as a group*, at who is in and who is not, there is a clearly defined line in

terms of career won/lost record. Don Sutton is far above that line. He has done what Hall of Famers have always been expected to do.

You can point out that in this generation there have been an unusual number of pitchers who have had long, successful careers; if we put all of them in the Hall of Fame it's going to be pretty crowded. It can be argued that with all of the long careers, there is a need for the standards to adjust in accordance with performance norms, and I think I agree with that. I agree with it up to a point. Without any change, we would have to take in Tommy John, whose 259-207 career record is above the clearly defined line. Okay, we need to move the line; if it's tough on Tommy, sorry. Maybe the line needs to move so far as to exclude Ferguson Jenkins (284-226). Maybe. Maybe it has to move far enough to exclude Jim Kaat (283-237). But jacking the standards up all the way to where we exclude a 300-game winner? No way. Absolutely no way; that's just completely unfair to this generation of pitchers, when there are...what, a dozen or so pitchers who don't even have *two hundred* wins.

Al Oliver (111 points, born 1946)

Although he will not be a first-ballot selection, Al Oliver is very likely to make it into the Hall of Fame in time. He has 2,743 hits; the only players to be overlooked with a similar number are Vada Pinson (so far), Doc Cramer and George Davis. Just a few more hits would give him more than any player



Cruz: Is 17 years of power, speed and average enough?

who has been passed over by the Hall of Fame.

Bob Boone (74 points, born 1947)

Boone has entered the gray area, and has at this point a slight chance of eventually being selected to the Hall of Fame. Catchers with long careers have done very, very well in the voting, even when they were mighty short of supporting credentials. With 1,664 games played at catcher, Bob Boone is now ninth on the all-time list. All eight players ahead of him are either in the Hall of Fame or likely to be (six are in; the other two are Johnny Bench and Ted Simmons).

Jose Cruz (24 points, born 1947)

Despite my admiration for him, Jose Cruz has almost no chance of going into the Hall of Fame based on his accomplishments to this point. He is still playing well.



PLAYERS BORN 1948 - 1951

Mike Schmidt (183 points, born 1949)

Among players still in the productive part of their careers, Mike Schmidt is the most certain to go into the Hall of Fame. He has driven in 100 runs in a season seven times, scored 100 runs seven times; that alone gives him 42 points of the 100 needed. He has had eight 30-homer seasons plus three 40-homer seasons; that's another 28 points. He has won 2 MVP awards, played in 8 All-Star games and won 9 Gold Gloves; that makes another 49. As he nears the 500-homer plateau, there can be no question about his immediate selection.

Steve Garvey (116 points, born 1948)

Garvey is in the strong gray area. He should move past 2,500 hits before he's through. There is very little question he'll go in.

Ted Simmons (116 points, born 1949)

Ted Simmons is very likely, although not certain, to achieve eventual recognition by the Hall of Fame. He is certainly one of the six or eight best-hitting catchers in the history of baseball. Although he has had his defensive problems, his career totals of 2,370 hits, 238 homers and counting are strong Hall of Fame credentials for the position.

Dave Parker (103 points, born 1951)

If Parker were judged solely on his ballplaying accomplishments, he might go into the Hall of Fame based only on what he has already done, and he will almost certainly go if he has another year or two like his superb 1985. Because of some of the things that have happened to him, though, it should be assumed that he will have to clear the gray area (that is, reach 130 points) in order to be selected.

Ron Guidry (100 points, born 1950)

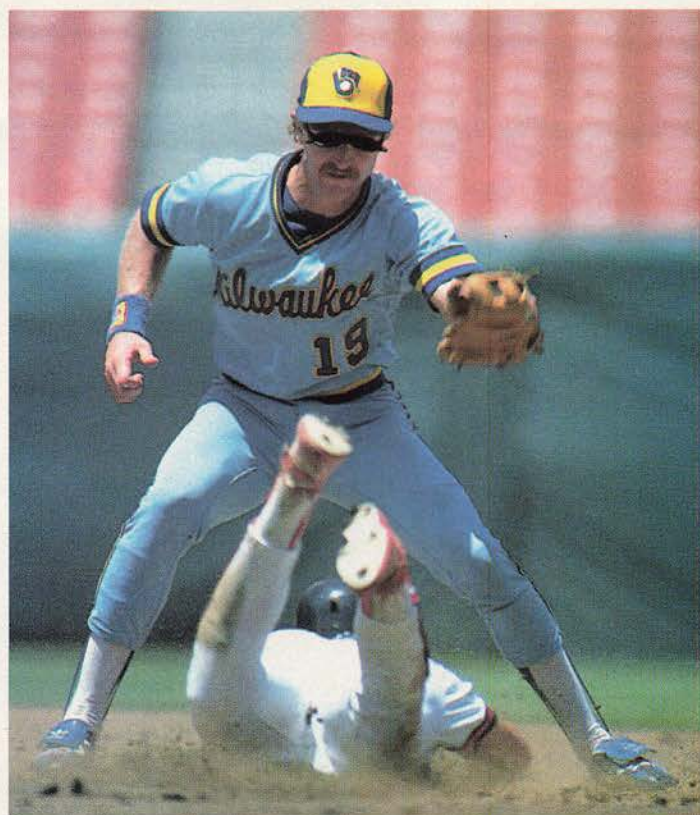
Ron Guidry's performance over the last three seasons (21-9 in 1983 and 22-6 in 1985) has made him a very strong Hall of Fame candidate. Now 35, Guidry's record is in many respects similar to those of two other great Yankee lefthanders, Whitey Ford and Lefty Gomez. None had a large number of 20-victory seasons. All three featured outstanding career winning percentages and pitched extremely well in the World Series. Like Cooper, Guidry has about a 50-50 chance to go into the Hall of Fame on the basis of current accomplishments, and is just reaching the level at which his career totals start to help him.

Cecil Cooper (97 points, born 1949)

Unless his productivity ends now and his career batting average slides below .300, Cecil Cooper has an excellent chance of going into the Hall of Fame in time. He has done the front-line things that are easy to summarize in a letter to *The Sporting News*—he has hit .300 many times including a high of .352, he has driven in 100 runs four times (three times more than 120), he has hit 30 home runs a couple of times, he has had 200 hits three times with a high of 219. He has exactly the kind of statistics that history loves.

Goose Gossage (93 points, born 1951)

Gossage is well positioned to gain Hall of Fame support and could clinch a berth with two or three more outstanding seasons. He has been arguably even more consistent than Fingers, having not had an ERA above 3.00 since 1976. He hasn't led the league in many things and hasn't posted the astronomical save and game appearance totals of Dan



Yount: A Gold Glove and big bat at a key position.

Quisenberry, but he has improved his credentials steadily with sub-2.00 ERAs, 20 and 30 saves, pitching in All-Star games and pitching in the World Series.

Dave Concepcion (79 points, born 1948)

Concepcion's current position *vis-a-vis* the Hall of Fame is very similar to that of fellow shortstop Larry Bowa, including winning Gold Gloves at a key position and playing on many division champion teams. Concepcion may be marginally stronger because his teams were more successful in postseason play. The big difference between them is that Concepcion is four years younger and has time left to strengthen his hand.

Bert Blyleven (74 points, born 1951)

Blyleven continues to make inexorable progress toward the Hall of Fame. He began picking up qualifications at a very early age and has marched steadily on, striking out 200 or more batters seven times, pitching a no-hitter, winning 20 games once, pitching in a couple of All-Star games, posting low ERAs, winning a World Series game, his career victory total mounting rapidly. It will all help, although he would be very unlikely to go into the Hall of Fame if his arm blew out in 1986.

Dave Winfield (73 points, born 1951)

With his fourth consecutive 100-RBI season in 1985, Winfield entered the gray area; he would have an outside chance of going into the Hall of Fame if his productive years ended now. He is the youngest player listed in this group, and since he is playing so well, his eventual selection seems fairly likely.

Bobby Grich (39 points, born 1949)

Although he has been a legitimately great player, there is no reason to think that Bobby Grich will go into the Hall of Fame. Slugging second basemen who also play good defense, as a class, have done poorly. Probably the most similar player was Joe Gordon, but others include Del Pratt and Tony Lazzeri. I'll say this: If Bobby Grich goes into the Hall of Fame, you're going to have real strong evidence that sabermetrics has made an impact on how talent is evaluated by the broader public.

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I regard Grich as a much greater player than Cecil Cooper or Ted Simmons, but he is much less likely to receive the recognition due him.



PLAYERS BORN 1952 - 1955

George Brett (145 points, born 1953)

George Brett is the only player among those in this age group who has virtually locked up a spot in the Hall of Fame. I know of no player with comparable qualifications—a power hitter with many .300 seasons, an MVP award, a Gold Glove, a .316 lifetime average, major contributions to successful teams—who has not been selected to the Hall of Fame.

Jim Rice (131 points, born 1953)

Although I personally would not regard Rice as being as good a player as Dave Winfield—he is not his equal as a fielder or baserunner, and I doubt that he would be a better hitter in the same park—the fact is that Rice has done the things that impress Hall of Fame voters. He has hit .300 (six times, 15 points), driven in 100 runs (seven times, 21 points), led the league in RBIs (three times, 12 points), hit 40 home runs (once, 4 points), had 200 hits (three times, 15 points). His career totals will probably make him an automatic selection within a year or two.

Bruce Sutter (91 points, born 1953)

One would have to assume that Bruce Sutter has a very nice corner on immortality.

Gary Carter (75 points, born 1954)

Carter has moved into the area within which he could be elected to the Hall of Fame on current credentials.

Carter has been badly hurt by the near misses of his teams. Had the Mets pulled out the championship last year, along with one or two of Carter's Montreal teams, then Carter might well have won a Most Valuable Player award, and in any case would quite certainly be in a much stronger position. But if he remains productive for two or three more years, he should be a very strong candidate, possibly moving into the first-ballot group.

Robin Yount (73 points, born 1955)

At this time Yount has few points for career accomplishments—but. You have to remember that he came to the majors early; he's just 30 now and has over 1,800 hits, so that if the shoulder has healed he's going to get close to 3,000. When he starts adding impressive career totals to his impressive seasonal accomplishments, he's going to have a very solid Hall of Fame case. He is not a Hall of Famer on the basis of current accomplishments, but I would expect him to have Hall of Fame credentials before the motion comes up for adoption.

Jack Morris (47 points, born 1955)

Among the starting pitchers of his generation, Jack Morris is the one who is making the strongest progress toward the Hall of Fame. It is not that he has done anything spectacular that immediately projects him forward, as Dwight Gooden did last year, but that he is picking up plusses here, there and everywhere, adding something almost every year. He has won 20 games; he wins 15 or more, adding something to his image, every year. He has struck out 200 batters; he has led the league in strikeouts. He has thrown a no-hitter. He has led the league in wins and innings pitched. He pitched two complete-game victories in the World Series. He has pitched in three All-Star games. His career winning percentage is good. His career win total, 123, is excellent at his age. He is *not* qualified for the

HOW IT ALL ADDS UP

To figure the status of active players as potential Hall of Famers:

Award 2.5 points for each season the player hits .300 in 100 or more games, 5 points for hitting .350 and 15 points for .400 (count each season only once). Award 5 points for each season of 200 or more hits. Award 3 points for each season of 100 RBIs or 100 runs scored. Award 2 points for each season of 30 HRs, 4 for 40 and 10 for 50. Award 1 point for hitting 35 doubles in a season, 2 points for 45 or more. Award 0.5 point for each season of 100 or more walks.

Award additional points for leading the league: in batting average (6 points), home runs or RBIs (4 points), runs scored (3), hits or stolen bases (2), doubles or triples (1).

Award 4 points for 2,000 career hits, 15 for 2,500 hits, 40 for 3,000 hits and 50 for 3,500 or more hits. Award 3 points for 300 career homers, 10 for 400, 20 for 500 and 30 for 600 homers. Award 8 points for a career batting average of .300 (in 1,500 or more games), 16 points for hitting .315 and 24 points for .330.

Award 15 points for 1,200 games played at catcher, 30 points for 1,400 games, 45 points for 1,600 games and 60 points for 1,800 games. Award 15 points for 1,900 games at second or shortstop, 30 points for 2,200 games there. Award 15 points for 2,000 games played at third. Award an *additional* 15 points if the player's total games at short, second and third are 2,500 or more. Award 15 points if the player has a career average of .275 and has played 1,500 games at short, second or catcher.

Award 8 points for each MVP Award, 5 for Cy Young Award, 3 for each All-Star Game played in, 1 for each Gold Glove and 1 for Rookie of the Year. If the player played *regularly* for a World Championship team award 6 points (per season) if he played catcher or shortstop, 5 points if he played second or center field, 3 for third base, 2 for left or right field, 1 for first or DH. If player played regularly on a league champion only, award 5 points if at short or catcher, 3 if he

played second or center, 1 if he played third. If player played regularly for a division champion only, award 2 points if he played short or catcher, 1 point if he played second, third or center.

For pitchers, award 2 points for each season of 15-17 wins, 4 points for 18-19, 6 for 20-22, 8 for 23-24, 10 for 25-29 and 15 for 30 or more. Award 2 points for each season of 200 strikeouts, 3 for 250 and 6 for 300. Award 2 points for each season with a .700 winning percentage (at least 14 wins). Award 1 point for each season with an ERA below 3.00 (50 games or 150 innings), 4 points if below 2.00. Award 2 points for a season of 20 or more saves, 5 points for 30 or more. Award 1 point for a no-hitter.

Award 2 points for leading the league in ERA, 1 point for leading in games, wins, innings, winning percentage, strikeouts, saves or shutouts. Award 0.5 point for leading in complete games.

Award 5 points for 150 career wins, 8 points for 175, 10 for 200, 15 for 225, 20 for 250, 25 for 275 and 35 for 300 wins. Award 1 point for career winning percentage over .550 (200 or more decisions), 3 points if over .575, 5 if over .600 and 8 if over .625. Award 10 points for a career ERA below 3.00. Award 10 points for 200 career saves, 20 for 300 saves.

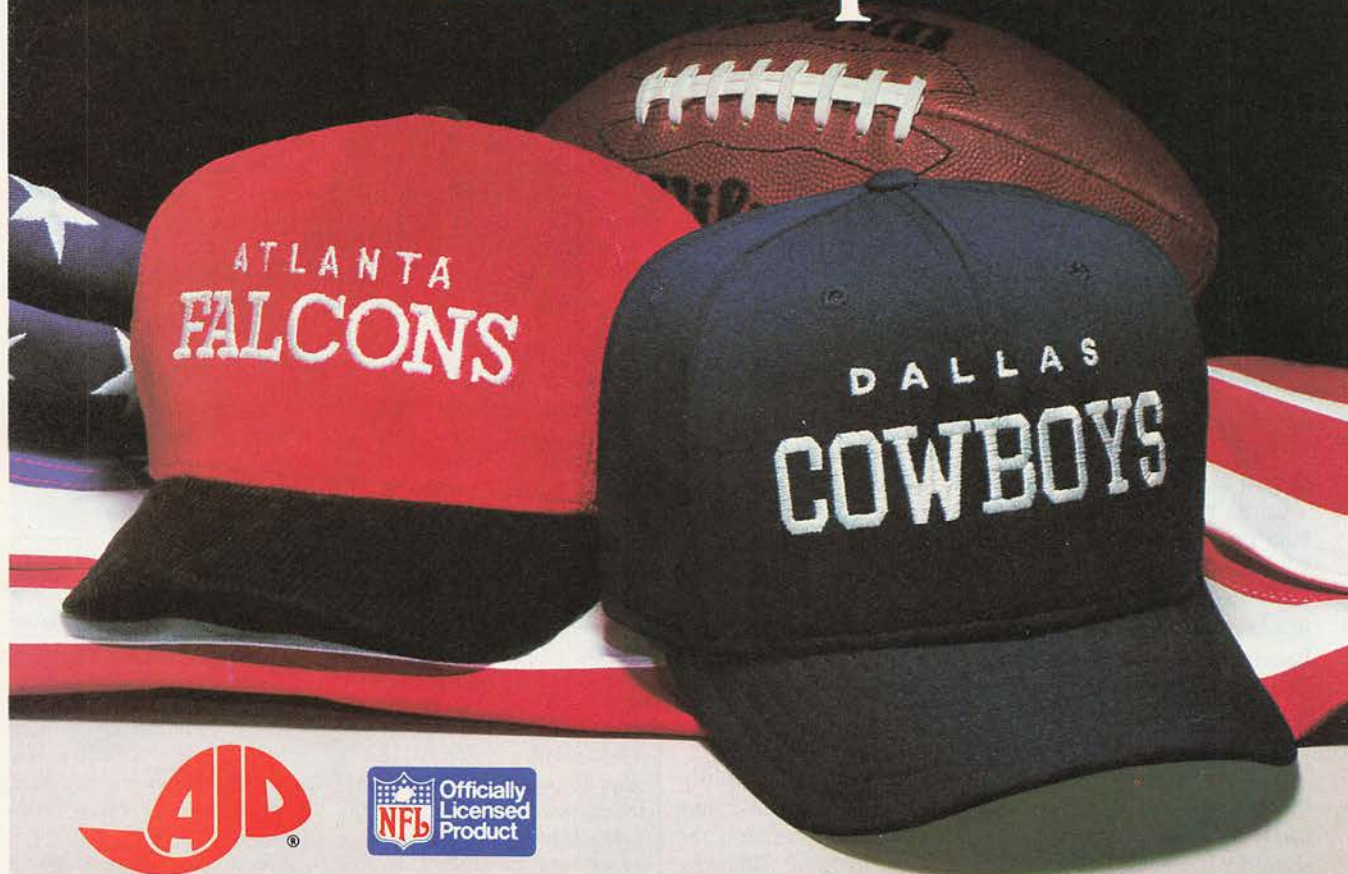
Award 10 points for pitching in 700 games, 20 for 850 games and 30 for 1,000 games. Award 10 points for 3,000 career strikeouts, 20 for 4,000.

Award 2 points for each World Series start and 2 for each World Series win. Award 1 point for each relief appearance in the Series. Award 1 point for each win in the LCS. (Total points awarded to pitchers for post-season play are limited to 20.)

For managers, award 2 points for each season managed (at least 100 games in a season). Award 8 points for each World Championship team managed, 5 points for each league champion managed and 3 for each division champion. Award 1 point for each 200 career wins and 1 point for each team he managed to at least 100 wins (in a season).

Any player or manager with a point total over 100 is a strong Hall of Fame candidate.

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Hall of Fame at this time, not even close. But if he continues to do the things he has done regularly since 1979, he will make it.

Andre Dawson (41 points, born 1954)

After appearing to be on a Hall of Fame course two years ago, Andre Dawson has done little to improve his position. Dawson will not make the Hall of Fame unless he is able to overcome the knees and play better than he has the last two seasons.

Scott McGregor (36 points, born 1954)

Scott McGregor has an outside chance of putting together a Hall of Fame record, but at this point he isn't close and he isn't moving very fast. His career totals will not begin to work for him in a major way for several years yet; he really needs two more 20-victory seasons to have much of a chance. A real longshot.

Frank Tanana (32 points, born 1953)

Frank Tanana looked like he would be the great pitcher of his generation. In his first five years (1974-1978) he did a lot of things that would impress a Hall of Fame voter. Then his arm went, and he has done nothing to help himself since. At times he has looked very much like a pitcher who was ready to turn it around and win 18 games again. I wouldn't be in the least surprised if he were to do that soon. If he were to have a 20-win season, he would reemerge as a serious Hall of Fame candidate. Short of that, he has no chance.

Jack Clark (17 points, born 1955)

Due to his frequent injuries, Jack Clark has been unable to do the things that Hall of Famers do. Sluggers have to reach the 30-homer and 100-RBI levels with regularity in order to make the Hall of Fame. Clark hasn't been able to do this.



PLAYERS BORN 1956 OR LATER

Dale Murphy (91 points, born 1956)

Dale Murphy will go into the Hall of Fame.

Eddie Murray (73 points, born 1956)

Murray has now entered the gray area; he would have a chance to enter the Hall of Fame on the basis of current accomplishments, even if he were to stop hitting. With career totals of over 1,500 hits and over 250 home runs by the age of 29, he is, given the extremely stable, consistent nature of his performance, almost certain to reach levels of accomplishment that will put him in the Hall of Fame.

Wade Boggs (58 points, born 1958)

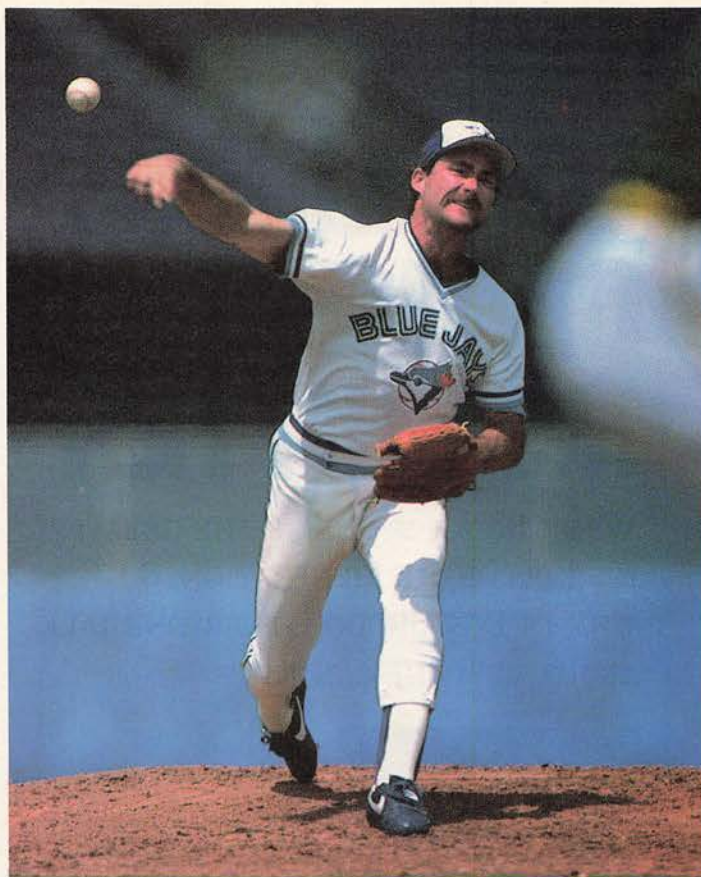
In just four years in the major leagues, Boggs has registered qualifications that already carry him a long way toward getting elected to the Hall of Fame. He will go.

Cal Ripken (58 points, born 1960)

Cal Ripken is doing all of the things that mark a Hall of Famer at an early age. In fact, it seems quite possible that Ripken might be one of those rare players, like Aaron, Ruth, Rose and Cobb, who reach totals of three or four hundred—players who are sort of ridiculously overqualified even for baseball's highest honor. It will be a major upset if Cal Ripken fades so badly that he fails even to make the Hall of Fame.

Dave Stieb (30 points, born 1957)

Stieb has been inches away from a number of accomplishments that would have given him a solid foothold on immortality. He could just as easily have won 20 games once or twice. He didn't. He didn't even reach 18. He could just as easily have had 200 strikeouts a couple of times. He didn't. He could have been voted the Cy Young Award. He wasn't. The Blue



Stieb: Close to 20 Ws, 200 Ks, a Cy Young, but only close.

Jays could just as easily have gotten into the World Series last year. They didn't. These shortcomings might ultimately cost him the honor. Still, he is compiling a very impressive log of accomplishments, and he well might make it.

Lance Parrish (29 points, born 1956)

Parrish is making good strides toward the Hall of Fame. Because the careers of catchers are shorter than those of other players, and because both the Hall of Fame Assessment System and the Hall of Fame voting make allowances for this, he is already closing in on the career standards that would rapidly project him forward.

Lou Whitaker (29 points, born 1957)

Whitaker is making excellent early progress toward the Hall of Fame. The next two or three seasons will tell us a great deal about his destiny.

Mario Soto (27 points, born 1956)

Though he was, I felt, the best starting pitcher in baseball from 1981 through 1984, Soto has not compiled much of a list of Hall of Fame qualifications. His chances are very slim.

Dave Righetti (14 points, born 1958)

Dave Righetti has done a few things that would help him in the context of a productive career—pitched a no-hitter, pitched in a World Series, won a playoff game, won a Rookie of the Year Award. But he has missed out on the basic accomplishments that drive a man into the Hall of Fame. He hasn't won 15 games in a season, hasn't led any leagues in anything. He's very much a longshot at this time. ★

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THE LONELINESS OF THE .351 HITTER

WADE BOGGS IS ONE OF THE GREATEST HITTERS OF OUR GENERATION. SO WHY, IN BOSTON, DOES EVERYONE TALK ABOUT WHAT HE CAN'T DO?



WADE BOGGS SLOGS AROUND third, arms flailing, weight on his heels, puffing down the line for home, seemingly 100 yards away. With his squarish body, stiffish and straight up, he runs like a Wheaties box with legs.

At first glance he seems awkward, pokey, completely lacking in the supple grace of a super-

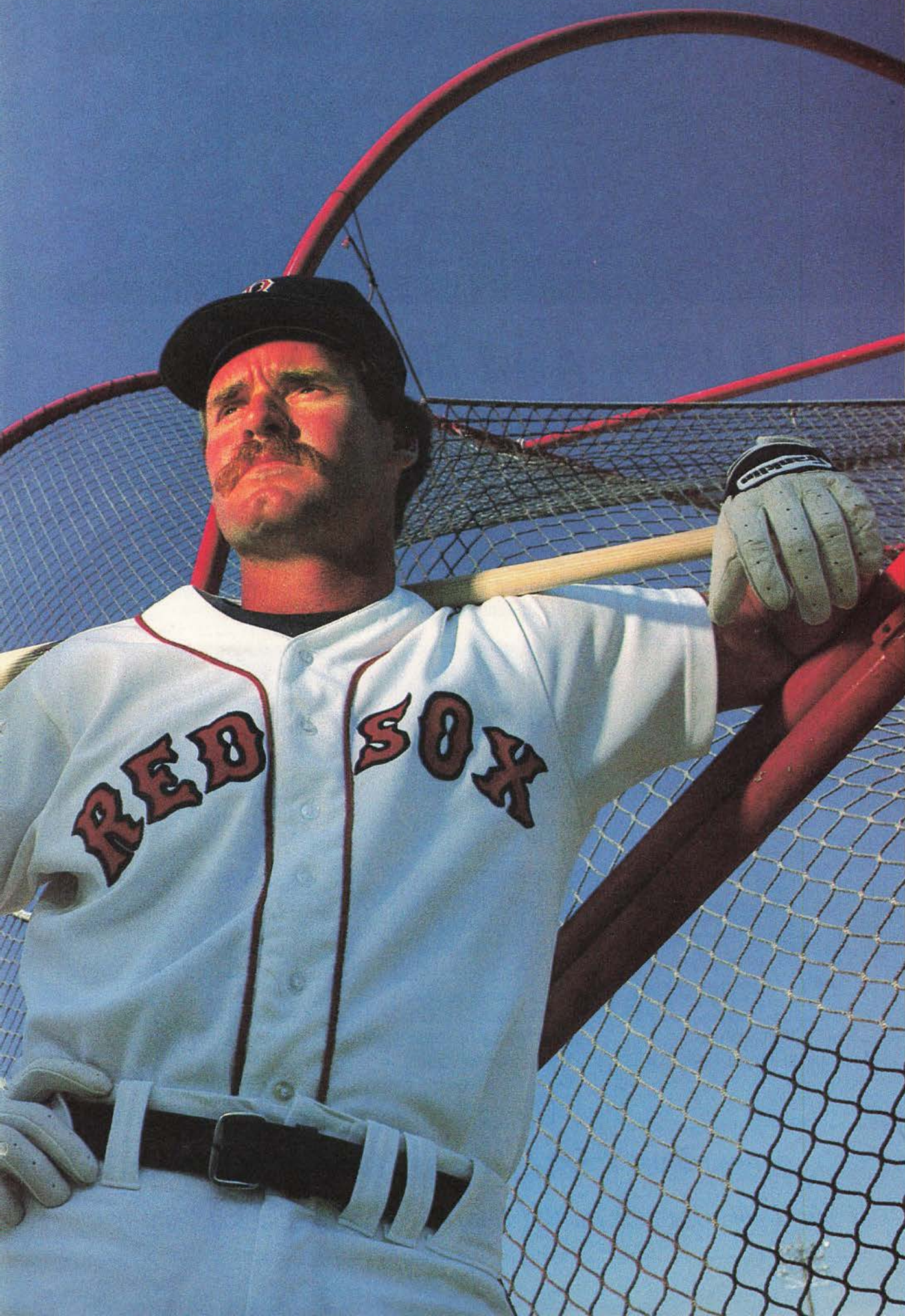
star—an illusion heightened by his beefeater muttonchops and even by his sluggish, swampish name—but listen to some numbers. Boggs hasn't just won a couple of batting titles, his batting average after four years is the seventh highest of any player in history and the highest average after four years of anyone in almost 45 years. In fact, if Boggs had retired after the '85 season, his .351 lifetime would have been the fourth best in the twentieth century.

As far as a lot of Red Sox fans are concerned, though, .351 and a dollar bill will get Boggs a ride on the MTA. A day after he lost his arbitration hearing last February, "settling" for \$1.35 million instead of \$1.85 million, a Boston newspaper ran a cartoon of Boggs standing on a street corner holding a tin cup in his hand. For the next week, letters to the editor and callers to radio programs had Boggs neck and neck with Qaddafi. And a couple of talk-show hosts, Joe and Andy, went on the air with a "hamburger helper" campaign to tide Boggs over through the poverty-stricken days that loomed ahead. "Tons of food poured into the studio," says Joe. "We almost had a health problem until we got the Boy Scouts to lug the stuff away."

Boggs doesn't let it get to him. He'd rather talk about his stats, something he does with the dispassionate tone of a police officer testifying in court. Hitting with two strikes, for instance. "More than half of my hits last year—124 out of 240—came on two-strike pitches," he says, "and my average after starting out

BY ROSS WETZSTEON





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0-and-2 was .390." And then there's that weird feat—which may be simultaneously one of the most trivial and most awesome stats in baseball history—of popping up to the infield only once during an entire season. "Actually, it was three times," Boggs quickly corrects, "but two were foul balls."

Yet despite Boggs' Cooperstown consistency, when reporters gather around his locker, their questions invariably focus on his weaknesses. "When are you going to start hitting some home runs?" That's the favorite this year, followed by thinly veiled aspersions on his fielding range, his throwing arm and his baserunning. That's the kind of respect a guy gets for winning two batting titles in his first four full seasons.



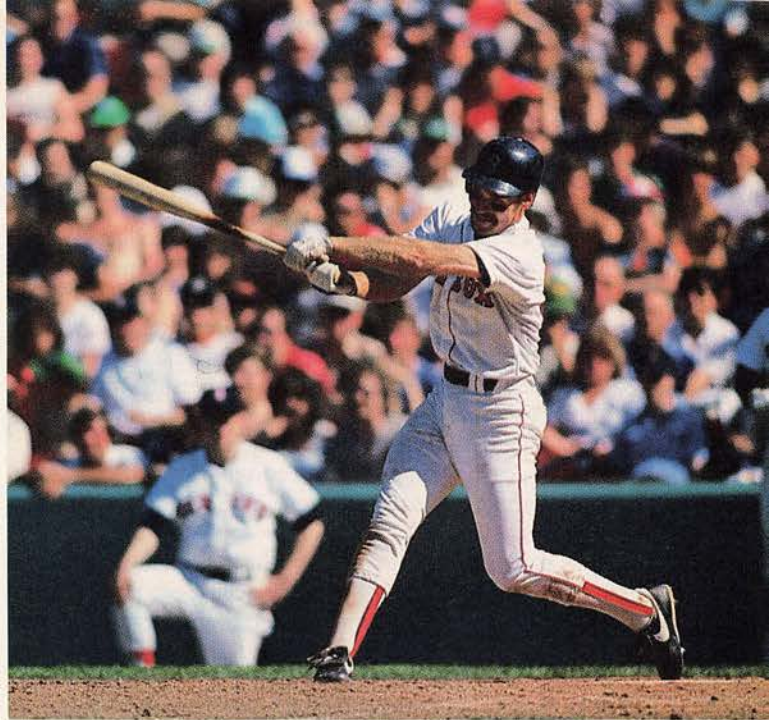
RESERVED, METHODICAL, BOGGS IS MORE COMFORTABLE with numbers than with reporters. While it's not true, as a Boston sportswriter claims, that he carries a calculator in his back pocket, he still makes Pete Rose look like an amnesiac. "An important part of my job is to keep a close eye on the stats," he says. "Just like a carpenter being careful with his measurements or an accountant being accurate with his figures." And indeed there is a strong strain of the CPA in his personality. Reciting the dozens of records he's broken, he doesn't give even a hint of hubris. "Fossil hunting," the Boston sportswriter calls it. "Yeah," Boggs says without smiling, "most of the records I break seem to be 63 or 75 years old." The record he's proudest of? "Hitting safely in 135 games in '85," he says matter-of-factly. "That broke Al Simmons' league record of 133 in 1925 and tied Chuck Klein's major league record in 1930." You could look it up, but when Boggs tells you something you don't have to.

One of the reasons Boggs doesn't get the cover-boy respect he deserves is that his stats add up with such quiet consistency, the stuff of notes columns instead of headlines. So he led the majors with 240 hits in '85 (the most hits in a single season since 1930—and that includes some guys named Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Stan Musial, Willie Mays, Mickey Mantle and Hank Aaron). So he hit 187 singles, the most ever in the American League. Okay, so he slaps out a lot of dinkers, but what about clutch hitting? Boggs hit .397 with runners in scoring position (.374 lifetime), some pretty potent dinkers. And of course you can't have too many slumps when you're putting together those kinds of numbers. The most at-bats Boggs went without a hit in 1985 was 10. At one point he reached base in 57 straight games (he immediately went another 23, for 80 out of 81—one game not reaching base out of a half season), and overall, he failed to reach base in only 9 of 161 games.

Still skeptical? Boggs got two or more hits in nearly half of the Red Sox' games last year. He batted .402 from June 12 to the end of the season (107 games). And the lowest season's batting average in his entire career (.325) is identical to Joe DiMaggio's lifetime average. But before you ask, "Where have you gone, Wade Boggs?" consider this: In 1985, if you add his 96 walks (which would have led the National League, by the way), plus the four times he was hit by pitches, to those 240 hits, you end up with a total of 340 times that he reached first base. Even a skeptic has to admit that's pretty impressive. *Pretty impressive?* Only three players in history have reached base more often in a single season—and those three players go by the names of Ruth, Williams and Gehrig.



IN THE AGE OF THE COMPUTER, OF COURSE, BA IS A PRIMITIVE, Smith-Corona stat, but no matter how you input last



Boggs slumped in 1984 and hit .325—Joe DiMaggio's lifetime average.

season's .368 or Boggs' .351 lifetime—Runs Created, Total Average, Linear Weights or Secondary Average divided by trips to the water cooler—it comes out Hall of Fame.

Yet listen to some Boston fans and you'd think Boggs still has to prove he belongs in the majors. Batting practice before a game with the Tigers. "Get a load of Rice," says a Red Sox rooster who goes back to Jimmie Foxx. Twenty swings, half a dozen pop-ups, half a dozen rollers, a couple of solid liners—but 3 Denver-high fly balls to center and 2 balls into orbit over the wall. "Now there's a hitter!" Boggs steps in for his 20—10 hard grounders, 7 liners to left, 3 soft flares over the shortstop, probably 12 or 13 hits to Rice's 4 or 5. The fan shrugs: "Yeah, he can put his bat on the ball." Another Red Sox follower: "For that kind of money you want a guy who can do some damage." A hard lot, Fenway fans—Bobby Orr and Larry Bird may be two of the most idolized athletes since Coroebus won the first Olympic sprint in 776 B.C., but put on a Red Sox uniform, as Williams and Carl Yastrzemski can testify, and you won't hear ungrudging cheers until the day they retire your number.

And that's true not only of Red Sox fans, but of the Red Sox organization itself. "I remember when I was hitting .330, my first full season in the minors," Boggs says with no trace of emotion, "and their minor league hitting instructor told me I'd never make it to the majors hitting like that." In 1980, in fact, the organization thought so little of him as a prospect that they left him unprotected. (He went unclaimed, although any one of the other 25 teams could have purchased his contract for \$25,000.) And a highly placed member of the Red Sox' front office, speaking strictly "not for attribution," laughs sardonically at any parallel to Don Mattingly. "The Yankees would never trade him even up for Boggs. They've made some crazy deals, but they're not that crazy."

Around the league, too, it sometimes seems that two batting titles and a couple of dozen "fossils" have won for Boggs only invidious comparisons. Who says Wade Boggs is the best hitter in the American League?, asks White Sox GM Hawk Harrelson. No way, it's Harold Baines. Another GM, asked what he'd give up for Boggs: "You've got to remember what happened to Fred Lynn and Carney Lansford when they left Fenway and its inflated averages. What would Boggs' gaudy stats

look like if he played in Anaheim or Oakland?"

Good question. Boggs hit .418 in Boston last year—.383 lifetime—but he "plummeted" to .322 on the road, only tied for second best in the league.

"Sure, he's got great numbers," says an American League manager, "but how much does he hurt you?" Another good question. Maybe that's a benign .368, a Matty Alou kind of average. But over 100 runs scored for three straight years, an average of over .400 for the entire month of September in both '84 and '85 and a higher average with runners in scoring position than overall average for every year he's been in the big leagues? That could hurt you so much you'd go numb.

Wade Boggs' biggest problem seems to be that he's set such high standards that baseball people have to pull him down a couple of notches, snipe away at his stats, focus on what he can't do, merely to comprehend what he has accomplished. First he's a one-year fluke, then a two-year seeing-eye hitter, then a three-year banjo hitter, then a four-year overachiever. The year he hits .400 the papers will be full of articles about his weak throwing arm. If only he looked more like an athlete, instead of an unhealthy, overfed Irish pubkeeper, those hits might stop seeming like accidents. If only he settled down to .320, .330 for a couple of seasons, his critics might stop worrying about Ty Cobb, relax a little and finally admit that he's one of the premier hitters of the second half-century. Boggs' fable has one of the oldest morals of all: In order to be appreciated, you have to start out by being mortal.

But what the hell is wrong with .351?



BASEBALL IS ALWAYS CALLED A GAME OF INCHES, BUT IT would be more accurate to call it a game of rituals. With Boggs, though, they are not just habits as simple as touching first base on the way to the dugout, we're talking about over a hundred rituals that begin more than five hours before game time. He leaves his apartment at precisely the same time every day, sits in front of his locker at precisely the same time, goes through all the pregame workouts at precisely the same time. "Yeah, I have a hundred superstitions at least," Boggs admits. "The order of my locker, the order of my bats, when I get a drink of water, how I put on the pine tar, how I use the batting donut, the Hebrew word *chai* I draw in the batter's box, throwing my glove to the same spot in the dugout—there's hardly a move I make that I don't have a superstition about."

But Boggs is no basket case endowing neurotic repetition with magic powers. "All my superstitions are just a way of giving myself positive reinforcement, of maintaining concentration. They're helpful in keeping my focus on my work, making sure distractions don't get to me." Concentration, focus, discipline—the paradox at the root of Boggs' seemingly neurotic behavior is that it serves an eminently rational purpose. And while it can be traced back to his family, his behavior doesn't stem from childhood trauma but from parental character. His father was an Air Force master sergeant, his mother a pilot, two professions hardly noted for their carefree spontaneity. "A lot of guys would have rebelled growing up in a family like that," he says, "but I always thought that kind of military environment was great."

Probably just as important, his father was a star softball pitcher in the Air Force. "He was the only real coach I ever had," Boggs says. "I don't really learn much watching other hitters because I already know how to hit from him. I was ambidextrous as a kid, but he made me hit lefty because I'd face more righthanders and throw righty so I could play more positions.

We still play burnout sometimes"—throwing the ball as hard as they can at each other, moving closer and closer together until one person gives up—"and he still destroys me."

"Wade was about 18 months old when it all started," his father, Win Boggs, says. "His grandfather sent him a plastic bat and a plastic ball and I pitched to him in the backyard. You could tell even then that he had good hand-eye coordination. By the time he was three or four I had him practicing hook slides. From 10 on I knew he'd made the majors. I debated long and hard about making him a switchhitter"—I, not we—"but I finally decided against it. Why be half good two ways?"

So the superstitions are probably a way of internalizing the dedication and discipline of his relationship with his father—for far from rebelling when he left home, he became even tougher on himself than his father had been. Two batting titles in four years? Boggs still takes more BP than anyone on the Red Sox. "My instincts were all there from the start," Boggs says, "but it took a lot of hard work to make them surface, and it takes a lot of hard work to keep them fresh. First, proper balance. Second, a slight weight shift forward. Third, weight shift backward. And fourth, forward again, hitting through the ball, with proper extension, finishing high, but not releasing the upper hand." That's all there is to it—if you're willing to work on it several hours a day, every day for 20 years.

But while Boggs has the most orthodox stroke in baseball, it produces some of the most unorthodox results. Of course he hits better on turf than grass, right? "Wrong. I always hit better on grass. The infielders play deeper on turf, so they can cut off a lot of hard grounders that'd get through on grass. Turf's for chop hitters, who beat out a lot of hits." Okay, but of course he hits better in day games than at night. "No, I hit much better at night. There are far fewer variables. And think about the way your eyes work. You're not squinting, your pupils aren't dilated, your eyes are open wider, there's a greater hitting area on the retina." Hitting is this guy's business.



SLUMP IS ONE OF THE WORDS BOGGS DOESN'T LIKE. Hitting, for him, isn't so much a matter of base hits as simply hard contact. "If I go 0-for-4 it doesn't bother me if I feel I'm swinging the bat well," he says, "and if that's not happening, I never use the word *slump*, I prefer *reconstruction period*. People sometimes ask me what happened in '84 [the year he hit "only" .325], but I feel—I *know*—I hit the ball just as well in '84 as in '85. The hits just didn't fall as often."

There's another term Wade Boggs doesn't like—.400. "I block all that out," he says quickly. "There's enough strain in this game without putting anymore on yourself." He obviously wants to change the subject but adds, after a pause, "If anyone is going to hit .400, I think it'll be someone down in the batting order—fifth or sixth. When you get as many at-bats as I do, it's just too hard to move your average up. Maybe you can hit .400 for 425 or 450 at-bats, but to hit that high with 600 or 650—that's real tough." One thing that will help Boggs a lot, if he ever gets close, is that his average always creeps up in August and September (.426 last year, .370 lifetime). If nothing else, that kind of late run will mean that the media won't be shoving cameras in his face as early as July 5, the way they did with Rod Carew and George Brett.

Brett—that's one of his three favorite words. Boggs always places a lucite triptych on the shelf in his locker, whichever clubhouse he's in. There's a Boggs baseball card on the left, a Brett card on the right and in the middle a photo labeled "Boggs and his Hero," picturing the two of them with their

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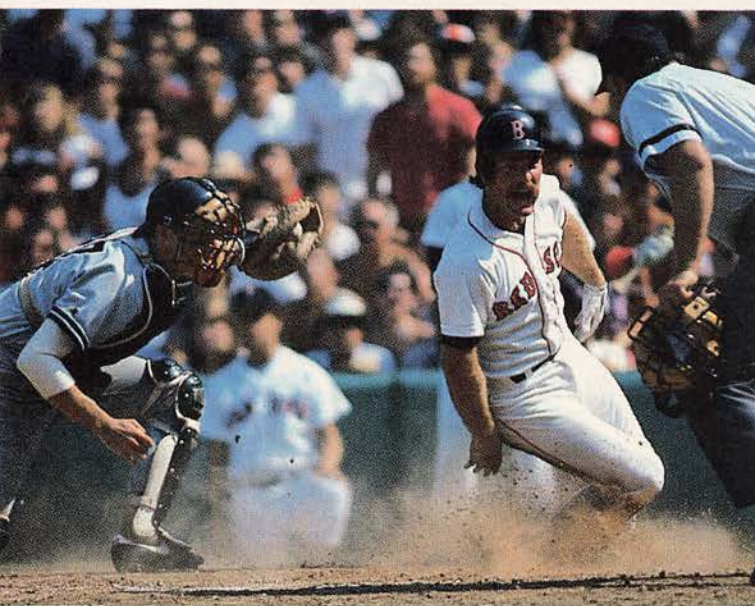
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arms around one another. "I'd been following him since 1978," Boggs says almost shyly. It's a rare moment, Wade Boggs revealing the warm introvert beneath the cool technician. "And on my first trip to Kansas City in '82, I went up to him before the game, introduced myself, said I played third base and batted lefty too and told him, 'I think of you as my idol.' Those were my exact words. We're close friends now, but I still don't call him George. I call him Idol." Boggs actually laughs. "It's the ultimate to a season to have me and Idol in a batting race. The competition doesn't affect our friendship at all. He came into Fenway last year—we were .359 and .357—and we flip-flopped every day throughout the entire series." (Boggs recites the exact stats after every game.) "We just went out for a hamburger and beer afterwards and laughed about it."

Another favorite—0-and-2. As Rene Lachemann, an ex-manager and current Red Sox coach puts it, "I used to tell my pitchers I could get them two strikes on Boggs easy, but from then on they were on their own. There's no doubt in my mind that he is the best two-strike hitter in history." And as teammate Don Baylor says, "When Wade gets to 0-and-2, the whole bench knows he's got the pitcher exactly where he wants him."



"I'm no roadrunner yet, but I'm faster than I was a few years ago."

Boggs returns to his sober, professional mien. "Ideally, I want to see what a pitcher has that day before taking a swing. I want to see what he has that *inning*. So I'll take, take, take, until I've seen his entire assortment of pitches. Then I'm ready to swing. Sure, that means I'm at 0-and-2 a lot [he offered at the first pitch only 25 times in '85, for a .280 BA], but I have no fear of going deep into the count. I'm hardly ever fooled by off-speed pitches, so I rarely strike out. And if a pitcher gives me his best stuff at 0-and-2, I have enough bat control that I can usually slow down my swing enough to at least foul it off."

But Boggs' favorite word of all is *Fenway*. It's one of baseball's falsest truisms that Fenway was built for righthanded hitters—15 of the last 16 league batting titles won by Red Sox players have been won by lefties, a fact that has not escaped Boggs' retina. Playing in Fenway, Boggs can spray hits off the Monster with his inside-out swing and can drop hits into an area in left and right center that's almost as large as some Latin American countries. And surrounded by righthanded batters he sees lefthanded pitching only a little more than those countries see snow.

Fenway, in fact, was the hidden subtext of Boggs' ballyhooed arbitration case last February. If Red Sox fans realized that the basic issue wasn't money at all, but the front office's refusal to give Boggs a no-trade clause in his contract, they might have been less outraged at his "greed" than enamored of his loyalty. Boggs doesn't like to talk about it—it's yesterday's oh-fer—but he insists that "I would have settled for a lot less than that \$1.85 million if they'd given me a long-term, no-trade contract." Boston general manager Lou Gorman concurs, but argues that it's "club policy" not to give no-trade contracts. "If we do it for one guy, we've got to do it for everyone—Dennis Boyd, Roger Clemens, Rich Gedman. And with all the 10-and-5 guys, [10 years in baseball, 5 with one team, giving them veto power over trades], pretty soon you've got a roster with 20 or 22 guys you can't move and your hands are completely tied."

Boggs' agent, Alan Nero, is still steamed, not by the arbitrator's decision, but by the public misperception that his client went to arbitration just for the dough. "Wade was willing to give up a *lot* for a no-trade provision—and I'm talking maybe millions down the line—but the Red Sox weren't committed to working something out. All you heard about Wade was greed, greed, greed—it's a tragedy."

But don't get the impression that Boggs wanted a no-trade contract because he loves to stroll through Boston Common or spend his free afternoons in Faneuil Hall. And as for the Boston fans, "they can think what they want," he says. "If they give me any trouble over that arbitration thing, I'm not going to let it bother me." No, Boggs' loyalty is strictly to Fenway, "the best park in baseball for Wade Boggs to hit in."

WHEN BOGGS SLIDES INTO THE THIRD PERSON WHILE talking about himself, it's not arrogance so much as objectivity, viewing himself as a smoothly functioning hitting machine. Although this single-minded, almost joyless approach to his profession certainly helps his average, it doesn't do much for his relationship with Boston fans. He's not exactly the kind of guy who's going to go into politics when his playing days are over. Perhaps the most tactful way of putting it is to say that he has a relatively low charisma quotient.

Yet in talking about other aspects of his game, that detached tone softens, his serene confidence undermined by hints of annoyance at his critics and by a fierce determination to improve.

Boggs may work on his hitting, but he labors at his fielding. He takes more grounders in spring training and pregame workouts than the rest of the Red Sox infield combined. His hands are excellent, his range steadily improving, his positioning impeccable, and while his arm is still no rifle it's perfectly zeroed. "The first thing I noticed when I came to Boston was how underrated Wade was defensively," says pitcher Tim Lollar. "He makes some unbelievable plays, and it's all due to hard work."

"There's no doubt in my mind that he's the best fielding third baseman in the league," says Rene Lachemann.

"I'm getting a little tired of hearing people say, 'Okay, he can hit, but he's no Brooks Robinson at third,'" Boggs says, bristling a bit. "I've led the league in total chances over the last three seasons and I think I've gone from a guy who people said couldn't play third in the bigs to a potential Gold Glover."

His running? "I used to believe you can either run or you can't," he says, "but I've learned that you can work on your speed just like anything else." If it's something that can be worked on, Boggs will be the first one on the field. "Instead of running on my heels, I'm trying to run more on the balls of my feet. One winter I even tied an inner tube to the wall of my base-

ment, stepped inside it and practiced running against the tension. I'm no roadrunner yet, but I'm a lot faster than I was just a couple of years ago."

But there's one knock that won't go away: no power. Don't worry, the homers will start to come, say Gorman and manager John McNamara—15, 20 a year by '87, '88 at the latest—but they leave the impression they're being patient rather than confident. "He has *situational* power," argues a major league scout, and everyone is quick to point out that he can put on his own bleacher show in BP when he wants to. In a home-run hitting contest in Chicago last summer, he easily beat guys like Jim Rice, Dwight Evans, Tony Armas, Carlton Fisk, Harold Baines and Ron Kittle. Why not? At 6-2 and 197 pounds, he's bigger than Yaz, he's bigger than Brett and Mattingly—in fact, he's almost exactly the same size as Eddie Murray and Mike Schmidt. Twenty-four homers in four seasons from a guy with a build like that? "Don't mess with his mechanics," insist coaches Johnny Pesky, Joe Morgan, Lachemann and everyone else on the Red Sox staff—but there's an undeniable tone of uneasiness.

Jim Rice puts it a little more bluntly than most. "He could hit 20 homers and still bat .300, but does he want to? He's got the power, but he's not going to use it. Why not? I don't know. Maybe he doesn't want to weaken his foundation. Maybe he doesn't want to go beyond the limits of what he knows he can do."

■ ■ ■
WALT HRINIAK, THE RED SOX BATTING coach, doesn't have any fantasies about a homer title in Boggs' future. "Wade knows what he can do and he should stick to it," he says, spitting tobacco juice on the dugout floor. "I do encourage him to pull the ball a little more, but only in certain situations, against certain pitchers. Basically, though, he should keep hitting up the middle or the opposite way, it's much better for his mechanics." Another splat on the dugout floor. "What makes him exceptional is a couple a things. Balanced stance. Back before forward. Lowers his head on the ball. Head down as he swings. Stays down and over the ball. Gets a better look. Doesn't pull off the ball. Wait, wait, wait—not committing himself too early. Never fooled by a pitch. When was the last time he looked bad at the plate?" Splat. "When he struck out as the last batter in Dave Righetti's no-hitter—how many years ago was that? As far as getting the base hit goes, he's the best hit-

ter I've ever seen in my life. You're going to fool around with *that*?"

One guy who's not going to fool around with that is Wade Boggs. "The power is there," he says plainly. "But does Wade Boggs want to hit fly balls or line drives?" Asked how far he thinks his batting average would fall if he hit 25 homers, he almost winces. "I couldn't even guess. All I know is that it'd be much lower—drastically lower. Why change success?" As one Red Sox reporter puts it, "Wade's the kind of guy who had everything planned out from the beginning of his life and who followed the plan perfectly. He won't change, not for anything."

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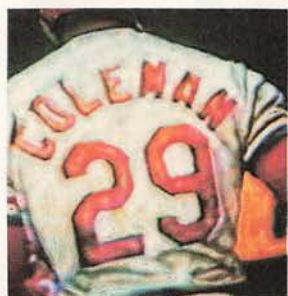
On the night of May 13, 1967, Yaz and former Red Sox second baseman and coach Bobby Doerr went out for dinner, talked for hours and made a fateful decision—Yaz would become a pull hitter. He went from 16 homers to 44. Does Boggs think anything like that will ever happen to him? He doesn't pause for a second. "Never," he says. To Wade Boggs, there's nothing wrong with .351, nothing at all. ★

Ross Wetzsteon's last story for *SPORT*, a profile of sportswriter Dick Young, has been reprinted in the collection *Best Sports Stories 1986*.

VINCENT VAN GO AND THE ART OF STEALING

IN WHICH WE CONSIDER: WHAT KIND OF MAN

STEALS BASES; JUST HOW IMPORTANT IS A STOLEN BASE; AND
CAN VINCE COLEMAN STEAL 200 OF THEM?



For those of us who live predominantly stationary lives, Vince Coleman's speed is incomprehensible. Here we are, slumped in our stadium seats, burdened by our own weight put on by too many ballpark franks and oversized cups of beer.

And there is Vince Coleman, a scant few yards off of first base. His lead is three short walking steps, then a fourth step to the side, until his right foot is on the edge of the artificial grass. He is a human study in potential energy: crouched there, intent on watching Joe Hesketh, the Montreal Expos' pitcher. It's the first inning of the season's third game and Coleman, who stole 110 bases in his rookie year of 1985, has yet to attempt even one this year.

Willie McGee is at the plate, with a one-ball, one-strike count, and then suddenly Coleman is off, running for second base on the third pitch to McGee, a swinging strike two. Coleman slides headfirst and arrives well ahead of catcher Tom Nieto's throw: two-point-eight seconds, less than the duration of a breath in a resting human being.

McGee strikes out, leaving Coleman at second base, but with Tom Herr batting, Coleman steals third (2.5 seconds). Nieto's throw is late and gets past third baseman Tim Wallach, rolling into left field. Coleman scores and the Cardinals lead 1-0.



"Sunday, St. Louis pitcher Danny Cox asked Coleman how many bases he could steal if he ever learned how to draw 100 walks and bat above .300 like Rickey Henderson...."

"Coleman...said calmly, 'Maybe 300 bases.'"

"He presumably was joking."

—Thomas Boswell, *Washington Post*, August 12, 1985

Vince Coleman wants to raise the art and science of base stealing to Ruthian heights. He wants to rewrite its cosmology.

Maybe he was joking when he said he could steal 300 bases, but he has said, if he cut his strikeout total from his 115 of last year to, say, 50, and he put the ball into play another 60 or so times, he might be able to get 30 hits a year more than the 170 he had in 1985. "If I get 200 hits, I would have the

opportunity to steal 200 bases," he says.

Think for a moment: 200 stolen bases.

Chicago Cubs manager Jim Frey says a player stealing 200 bases in a season would be like someone hitting 90 home runs, and he's not far off. Two hundred stolen bases would be more than one and one-half times the current record of 130, set in 1982 by Rickey Henderson; one and one-half times the current home run record of 61 would be 92. It would be an unprecedented leap in the stolen base record. Henderson's total was only 12 more than the record he broke, Lou Brock's 118 steals in 1974. In turn, Brock's total was 14 more than Maury Wills' record of 104, set in 1962. And the regression in the record continues, back to Ty Cobb's 96 in 1915 and then in similar increments back through totals numbering in the 80's, 70's and 60's, to the turn of the century and the beginning of the modern era of baseball.

Can Coleman steal 200 bases? To do it, given his 1985 success rate of 81 percent (110 steals, 25 times caught stealing), he would need 247 attempts; only two teams in the major leagues had 240 attempts last year—the Cardinals, who had 410, and the Montreal Expos, with 246. Henderson had 172 attempts in his record year. But Coleman would

probably be caught stealing more often than before, since he would be running in riskier situations. And there may be a physical limit to the number of attempts a runner can undertake. Players who know talk about the toll on the body stealing megabases takes.

Still, it's an intriguing question, a question worth examining further: How many bases can one man steal?



"To be a good base stealer, you have to have a certain arrogance."

—Maury Wills

There is certainly no lack of arrogance in talking about stealing 200 bases in a season. But discussing records of that magnitude with no grounding in the basic laws of the stolen base

BY JOSEPH M. SCHUSTER



is like discussing the significance of $E=mc^2$ without knowing what the letters stand for. And so I talked to Maury Wills.

Wills was the Moses of the stolen base: He didn't write the law but he brought it back to the people. During the three decades before Wills' 1962 season, league leaders in the stolen base usually had totals in the 20's and 30's and occasionally in the high teens. In every year since Wills set his record, except for 1963, the league leaders in stolen bases have had totals of 50 or more.

Today, Wills doesn't get around as fast as he did 20 years ago, hobbled from arthritis in his right knee that he attributes to the wear on his joint from running bases and sliding. His hands also cramp sometimes, from the spiking wounds he got going handfirst into a base and getting stepped on "acciden-

tally on purpose." But he can still talk about it.

First, to get the question out of the way, I asked him if he thinks anyone will ever steal 200 bases.

"I can't say," he replies. "No one ever thought anyone would steal 100, and, of course, people have done that."

There are three characteristics of a great base stealer, Wills says. "He has to be a player willing to punish himself. He has to be willing to have the aches and pains. He has to be willing to have opposing players not like him very much." He has to have that arrogance, Wills says, "because he has to know he can steal at any time, off of any pitcher.

"Second, it's nothing special to learn to read a pitcher. Anyone can sit down and learn to read a pitcher if he tries. But you can't learn speed. What separates the guy who steals 50

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from the guy who steals 100 is speed."

Third, Wills says, a player has to find a way to get on base. Any way. And the base hit is the last way. "You could hit a good line drive but have it be right at somebody. You take too many chances when you hit the ball hard, there are no guarantees. You have to look for the base on balls. Some players like to get hit—I never liked getting hit by a pitch—but some will. If you are willing, you'll have your opportunities because they'll be throwing at you."

Wills, the first man in the modern era to steal 100 bases, remembers the rarefied air at that altitude. "Once you get past 50 or 60 steals a year, for every 5 bases you add to that, it gets tougher to steal, because of the physical toll—you bruise more, your muscles get tighter. The pitchers are going to be doing things far beyond anything they are doing against any other player. They get more information about you just as you get information about them. The more times you attempt to steal, the more chances you take."

■ ■ ■
"First base is nowhere."

—Lou Brock, *Stealing Is My Game*

Steve Boros, who managed Rickey Henderson when he was with Oakland from 1983 into '84 and coached Tim Lincecum with Montreal before that, stole all of 11 bases in his seven-year major league career. Nonetheless, he's perhaps the closest to a base-stealing guru in baseball today. Talking about it, he breaks the art and science down to its most minute aspects: how much time a runner has in which to reach second base once he decides to run; what a runner should look for in a pitcher's motion. Boros even has an explanation for why the great base stealers are relatively short. (Raines is 5-8, Henderson, 5-10, Brock and Wills, 5-11, Coleman, 6 feet.)

"Shorter players are better base stealers because the biggest problem for a base stealer is that he's facing home and he has to turn around to go to second base," says Boros. "Shorter players can turn around faster; their center of gravity is lower. Taller players tend to straighten up before they run."

Think of stealing a base as running the first 30 yards of a 100-yard dash: The runner who will win that sort of race, Boros says, is the fastest runner out of the gate. A shorter player, with short legs, is not going to have the stride and endurance of a taller runner and so won't beat him over 100 yards or even 60 yards. But the race is not that long, and it's won by the runner with the best start.

Boros has timed pitchers' deliveries to the plate and catchers' throws to second base. The average pitch reaches home plate in 1.4 seconds; the average catcher's throw travels the 127 feet 3½ inches to second base in 2 seconds—a total of 3.4 seconds. (Remember Coleman's time of 2.8 seconds? Lee Thomas, the Cards' director of player development, says that speed was the reason the Cards signed Coleman, despite the fact that, as Thomas says, "He was as green as anyone I've ever seen.")

Besides clocking pitchers, Boros has studied their motions to first and to the plate. There are no general rules of what to look for in a lefthander's motion: The key could be anything, Boros says. "It could be his head, it could be his leg. That's why it's so difficult to steal on a lefthander. But in a righthander, the motion to look for is the movement of his front shoulder. When he rotates it away [from first base], he's going to the plate."

But, Boros says, the great base stealers seem to decide to run even before they see the motion. "That's what we call getting a jump—they go a split second before the pitcher's move to unload to the plate."

■ ■ ■
"People overestimate the value of the stolen base gamble."

—Bill James, *The Bill James Baseball Abstract*
"How many games has Bill James won as a manager?"

—Whitey Herzog

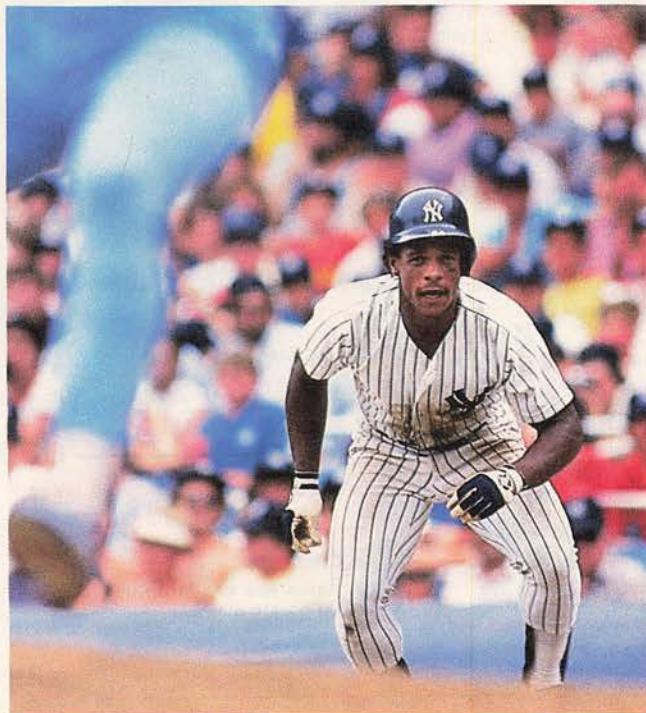
Craig Wright looks at the stolen base objectively and concludes that, in most cases, baseball people have an unrealistic view of its value as an offensive weapon.

Wright is a sabermetrician—someone who tries to understand baseball through the arcane magic of numbers. The going gets turgid here, and if probability theory and higher mathematics disturb your equilibrium, take it slowly, starting with what Wright has to say about the possibility of Vince Coleman—or anyone—stealing 200 bases.

"If you really wanted to run with abandon, you conceivably could steal 200 bases in a season. But each of his stolen bases would not be as valuable to his team as would each base if he had 100."

Wright has made some calculations based on the Palmer Potential Run Method (named for another sabermetrician, Pete Palmer), which goes like this: The potential for a run is based on the location and number of base runners and the number of outs. For example, with a runner on first and one out, the run potential is .478. If the runner steals second (making the situation one out, runner on second), the potential increases to .699. But if the runner is caught stealing (nobody on, two outs), the run potential falls to .095.

Wright has calculated that the average run value of a stolen



Henderson: "If I played in the NL, I might steal 200."

base is .21, but the loss of run value from a caught-stealing is -.35. Thus, every caught-stealing takes away more than a steal adds. The break-even point—the point at which the gain from a stolen base equals the loss from a caught-stealing—therefore increases as more steals are attempted. To steal 50 bases, the runner must be successful in about 65 percent of his attempts. But in attempting more steals, the caught-stealing total would be higher—to steal 200 bases, Wright figures Coleman would need

to be successful about 80 percent of the time.

Fellow sabermetrician Bill James ranks the stolen base as the least valuable offensive weapon, but managers Boros and Herzog say there are points that statistics, no matter how complex, do not account for.

Herzog says, "How many times would we have hit into the double play if we hadn't stolen a base, or how many times did we score a run without a hit because we got a walk, stole second and got two ground-ball outs with the infield back?"

"As soon as you steal second with less than two outs, you take your team out of the possibility of the double play," Boros says. "How do statistics account for the tremendous weapon that is? Stolen bases shorten up the infield, create anxiety in the middle infielders. There are so many ramifications from the stolen base or the threat of it that statistics can't measure."



"Some of the big cities on the coasts think they're pretty hot stuff. Well, maybe they are. But how many guys from New York or LA are going to throw out Vince Coleman this year?"

—A radio ad promoting the city of St. Louis

So, with all this as background, and armed as he is with his speed and his arrogance, can Vince Coleman really steal 200 bases? Well, probably not.

"You can't steal 200 bases on a contending ballclub," says Herzog. A player going for 200 stolen bases would have to run almost every time he reached base, with little regard for a team's offensive strategy, and he may run his team out of a good inning by being caught stealing. For a player to steal 200 bases, Herzog says, he would have to steal third base regularly. "But there are very few times, when you're in a pennant race, when you're going to let a player steal third with no outs and Willie McGee up there. You're not going to steal third base with two outs and Jack Clark up there. No way."

A player on a last-place ballclub, out of the pennant race early in the season, could maybe do it, Herzog says. But Steve Boros doesn't agree.

"Even on a last place team, you still have a responsibility to play to win," Boros says. Because the runner would have to steal third base a lot to make his goal, his running would cost his team too much to be of value. Runners are more successful stealing third when they try it less often. "One of the advantages of stealing third is that it is generally unexpected," Boros says. "Once you draw attention to the fact that you're going to be stealing third, they'll put the pickoff play on more often. The pitcher will be paying more attention. And it's distracting to the hitter to see the runner dancing around on second."

Tim Raines, the Montreal Expos' leftfielder, has 384 stolen bases in his last five seasons. He explains what it would take for 200 steals. "You'd have to steal a base or two every game, and four or five bases, say, 10 or 11 times or more. [Last year, Coleman stole four bases only once.] You would get yourself into a situation where you were down by eight runs, or in a close game, where you [shouldn't] run and you have to run.

"You'd have to have a great year at the plate, .300 or better, with 80 or 90 or 100 walks. And if you have 100 stolen bases by the All-Star break, it would take its toll. It's a grueling season. That much running would hurt the body a lot.

"Also, if you're thinking about running all the time, you'll have to concentrate on swinging the bat up at the plate. If you worry about stealing 200 bases, it tends to get tough to get on base," he says.

Rickey Henderson agrees with Raines. "First, you have to



Raines: Stealing so many bases "would hurt the body a lot."

get on base at least twice a day. Then you've got to hope no one is on in front of you." You also have to hope that the batters behind you in the lineup don't hit, he says. "If they do, you'll mess them up" (by requiring them to take pitches to allow you to steal and by forcing them to hit when they are behind in the count).

A player may indeed steal 200 bases someday, Henderson says, and if it happens, it will probably be by someone in the National League. "There's more turf there, and it's faster. The parks are bigger," he says. A National League team's offense could more logically be built around speed than around power, which is not the case for most American League teams, which play in older, smaller ballparks with natural grass. Henderson says, "If I played in the National League now I might steal 200 bases in a season."

The final word might belong to Herzog, who says that if Coleman hit .320, he could well steal 150 bases. The count is on.



Mike Shannon: "Coleman's a terror, isn't he, Jack? He's just a terror."

Jack Buck: "He'll get in your brain. When he's running around in your brain wearing spikes, it's terrible."

—Cardinal radio announcers

After all the arguments, the arrogant claims, the statistics and the theory, there is still the speed, the incredible speed that is the stolen base stripped to its purest element.

At the end of the ballgame, we file out of the seats, 30,307 of us packed together, moving with irritating slowness down the concrete ramp to the street.

Coleman stole three bases tonight—bang, bang, bang. Three bases, three breaths. Only 128 more for the record; 197 more for the improbable.

Think of him, now: flashing over the flat, fading green artificial turf, hell-bent for second base.

Imagining Coleman fleeing first base makes us seem we're moving more slowly than we ever have before. ★

Joseph M. Schuster is a writer living in St. Louis.



WHY CAN'T PITCHERS HIT?

IN THE AL, PITCHERS HAVE THE
DH. IN THE NL, THEY DON'T EVEN TAKE BP.
CAN'T ANYONE HERE PLAY THIS GAME?



EARLY THIS SEASON, THE Padres and Expos figured out exactly how to beat the 24-man roster. Montreal used pitcher Dan Schatzeder as a pinch-hitter three times in one week and he responded with a single, double and triple—and twice he remained in the game to pitch.

In San Diego, over a 16-game stretch Padre pitchers compiled a .333 average with two home runs and five RBIs.

It seems that, after scanning their depleted benches, managers have quickly learned the value of a hitting pitcher. And given that added importance, the neglect accorded this part of a pitcher's game has become even more obvious. The bastions of baseball tradition are beginning to ponder a question long ignored: Why can't pitchers hit?

It's a simple question and when you raise it with National League pitchers and managers it often elicits simple answers, but with the spotlight suddenly on the ninth man in the batting order the regular responses won't do. In a year when managers should be looking at every angle for an advantage over the roster squeeze, this one seems particularly acute.

"I think you'll see teams placing more emphasis on their pitchers' hitting ability," Schatzeder says. "Now, a lot of pitchers go up there saying, 'I'm going to make an out, so I might as well take my three swings and go sit down.' With that attitude there's no way they're going to hit."

That attitude seems strange. It isn't as if guys became pitchers because they couldn't do anything else. On the contrary. "A young pitcher growing up is usually one of the better players on his team," says Mets manager Dave Johnson. "When he's not pitching he's playing a position, whereas the higher he goes in classification, the less he does that."

Johnson happens to have a pitcher who fits the mold. "I always wanted to be a hitter coming up as a kid," says Dwight

Gooden, who hit .226 last season. "Fortunately, I had a strong arm and they turned me into a pitcher. But I take time to hit every chance I get. I get more pumped by the hitting than the pitching."

The 21-year-old Gooden's rise to the major leagues was so swift that he lost neither the ability to hit nor his enthusiasm for it. With just two years in the league, his has become one of the handful of names—along with Schatzeder (.194 in '85), the Pirates' Rick Rhoden (.189) and Don Robinson (.238), the Dodgers' Fernando Valenzuela (.216) and the Cardinals' Bob Forsch (.244)—that invariably crop up when the subject turns to hitting pitchers.

"Most of the guys who are good hitting pitchers are good athletes who have been pretty good hitters all along," says Rhoden. "You can make yourself better, but you don't see too many guys who are lousy hitters who get to be a lot better."

That's because not only is it pretty tough to learn how to hit against major league pitching, but it's even tougher when you see that kind of stuff once every four or five days.


"The main reason that pitchers can't hit is that we just don't have the time to teach them," says Pirates batting coach Bill Virdon. "You have only 40 minutes for batting practice on the road and you have to use it for your regular hitters. Pitchers just don't get enough time hitting against live pitching."



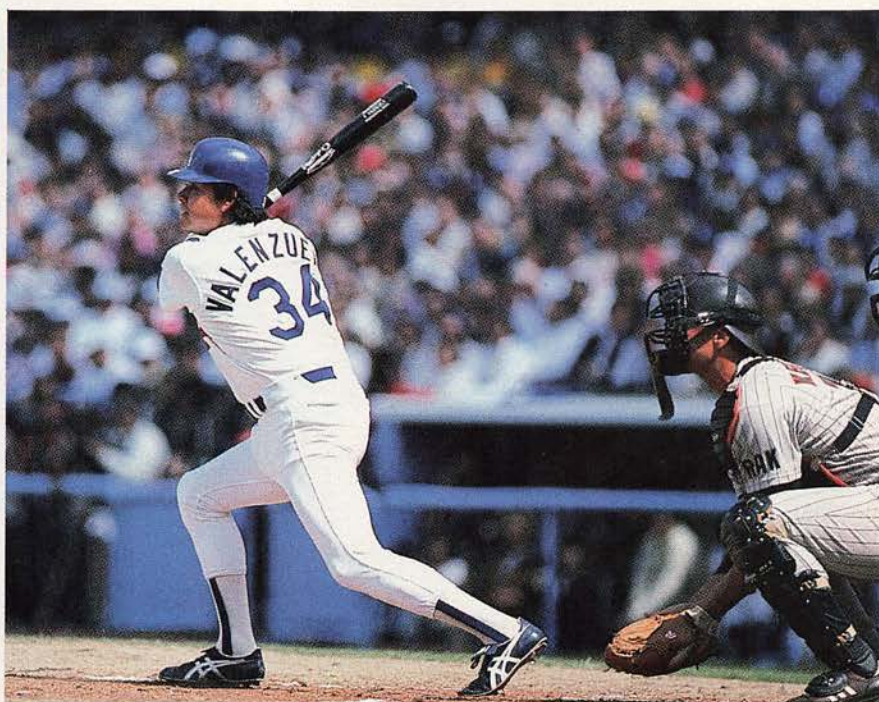
PITCHERS JUST DON'T GET THAT MUCH TIME HITTING AT all. John Tudor, when did you last step to the plate before the Red Sox traded you to the National League in 1983? "College," says Tudor. "Probably 1974."

Surely the use of the designated hitter in the minor leagues undermines the batting skills of young pitchers who don't jump to the majors as rapidly as Dwight Gooden. In December 1983, all National League affiliates were given the option to use the DH when they face AL farm clubs. So now the last professional baseball league that allows its pitchers to hit prevents them from practicing that craft full-time in the minor leagues. It seems that the entire league has given up hope of ever finding another Walter Johnson (who hit .440 for the Washington Senators in 1925) or Red Ruffing (who had five consecutive .300 seasons for the Yankees and Red Sox from 1928-32).

BY ROBERT SKLAR



Even strong-hitting
Rick Sutcliffe can't believe
the stuff he's seen.



For Dwight Gooden and Fernando Valenzuela, a game isn't complete without a few hits.

In spring training today, managers want pitchers in the batting cage to work mostly on laying down the sacrifice bunt. "Every day we have them bunt, bunt, bunt," Cardinals manager Whitey Herzog says. "Or we have them chopping the ball, trying to get it by the pitcher in some bunt situations."

Dave Johnson agrees. "The pitcher who can bunt, who can handle the bat, obviously will get more innings than the guy who can't," he says. "If the pitcher can't get the man on base over, I have to get somebody in there to get him over and get back in the ballgame."

Even the Pirates seem to overlook the batting potential in their pitching staff. They are taking batting practice before a game against the Cardinals. When Don Robinson steps in to take his cuts, manager Jim Leyland hollers out, "Get it down, get that bat out front." Robinson pushes half a dozen bunts up the first-base line. That done, he swings away, lashing line drives toward left. His last shot clears the 330-foot leftfield wall, barely fair inside the foul pole. Leaving the cage, he exchanges a mock high five with the next relief pitcher waiting his turn to bat.

As a reliever, Robinson batted only 21 times in 1985, with two doubles and a home run among his five hits. His .476 slugging percentage ranked up there with those of Dale Murphy, Pedro Guerrero and Mike Schmidt. When arm trouble threatened his pitching career a couple of years ago, Robinson worked at becoming an outfielder. On the last day of the 1984 season, in a doubleheader against the Phillies, Robinson earned a save in the first game, then started the second game in left field. He had one hit in three times at bat, with an RBI.

Robinson is realistic about the handicap pitchers face at bat. "When I go up there to hit I hate to see a fastball inside," he says. "I can't turn on it, because I just don't get in enough hitting. Sometimes I'll go up there and swing as hard as I can at the first pitch and miss it so that I know, on the next pitch or the one after, they'll throw me a breaking ball. If it's off speed, it's something I can catch up to."

Other pitchers don't struggle to surpass the league's norms for pitchers' hitting. With major league salaries averaging over \$430,000 a year, some pitchers want to give full at-

tention to their meal ticket.

"You have to spend time," says the Dodgers' Bob Welch, for years one of the league's weaker-hitting starting pitchers (.096 in '83, .078 in '84 but, miraculously, up to .180 in '85). "My profession is a little bit more involved in pitching."

But the question remains: Is it so much to ask of a pitcher to concentrate on all the aspects of his game? No one hesitates to expect a catcher to hit, although he is just as involved in the pitch by pitch progress of a game. And besides, shouldn't a pitcher at the plate be as capable as any batter of thinking along with the pitcher on the mound?

"What sets us back is that we're being paid to specialize in pitching," Schatzeder says. "Catching is specialized too, and that's why you don't see too many catchers who hit for a high average. The same with a second baseman or shortstop. Usually the ones who hit are your outfielders and first basemen. There's a correlation between the degree of specialization at your position and the amount of time you have to concentrate on hitting."



THERE ARE SIGNS THAT THE 24-MAN ROSTER HAS SLOWED down the trend toward the one-way pitcher. The Mets, whose staff batting average of .180 was the highest in the NL last year, have recently begun to let their starters take batting practice with the regulars. "It's the first time we've done it since I've been here," says the Mets' third-year batting coach, Bill Robinson. "We've incorporated it into the usual practice before a game. It'll add another dimension and that can win a ballgame."

"Hitting for me is an opportunity to fulfill a fantasy," Schatzeder says. "I think a lot of pitchers wish they could be everyday players."

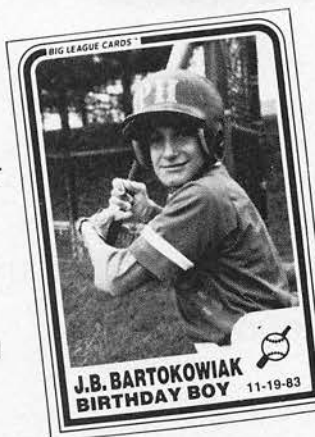
The Baseball Encyclopedia lists in its players section all those pitchers who played at least 25 games as a pinch-hitter or position player. You might have thought we wouldn't see many more of those in our lifetime, but roster reductions may add a few this year alone. "I don't think people come to see a pitcher hit," says Whitey Herzog. But you pay to see him try. And, who knows, it might pay off for his team as well. ★

Robert Sklar is a professor at New York University and a freelance writer.

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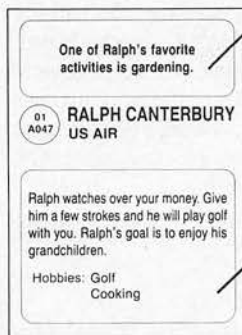
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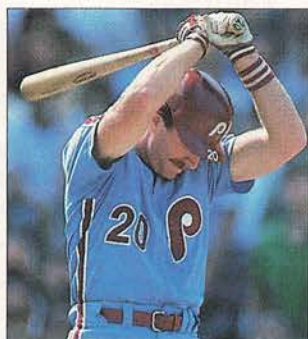
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MIKE SCHMIDT LOVES BASEBALL —SERIOUSLY

THINKS TOO MUCH. SMILES TOO LITTLE. GREAT BUT
COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER. THAT'S THE BOOK ON MIKE SCHMIDT.
BUT MAYBE WE'VE BEEN READING HIM WRONG.



AFTER HE RETIRES, SOMETIME around 1990, Michael Jack Schmidt will be remembered as the greatest power hitter of his generation and among the very best ever. Schmidt has led the major leagues in home runs six times and led the National League seven times. He has the highest slugging percentage (.535), the most home runs over the last 10 years (365) and the most home runs over the last 5 years (175) of any active player. Since his rookie year in 1973, Schmidt has averaged 35 home runs a year, one every 14.72 at-bats, the fourth best frequency of all time, behind Babe Ruth, Ralph Kiner and Harmon Killebrew.

Schmidt began the 1986 season with 458 career homers, seventeenth all time and second among active players to Reggie Jackson (530). Even a soft year will lift him past Willie Stargell and Stan Musial (both 475) and within range of Lou Gehrig (493). If he can average just over 28 home runs for five more seasons (he is 36 years old), he will join Hank Aaron, Ruth and Willie Mays on the far side of 600.

Moreover, Schmidt has played in two World Series, five League Championship Series and eight All-Star games. He has won nine Gold Gloves, back-to-back MVP awards in 1980 and '81 and a World Series MVP. In 1984, he became the first athlete in history to earn a salary of \$2 million.

And yet, years from now when we close our eyes and summon the image of Mike Schmidt in his prime, when we picture him standing in the dirt cutout at second base, two runs across, the Veterans Stadium boos turned to cheers, he will appear to us unmoved, almost sullen, and he will be expelling a woeful sigh.

Says veteran beat writer Peter Pascarelli of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*: "I have never seen a player with so much talent play the game with so little joy."

BY DAVID WHITFORD

"WELL, THAT'S THE WAY I'M PERCEIVED BY A LOT OF people. Like, 'Oh, shit. I gotta go out and make these backhand stops and hit these home runs and strike out and be booed and go through this whole bullshit again today, huh?'"

Mike Schmidt—the mustache still red, the hair flecked with gray—sits at a round conference table in a windowless room. On the table is a tape recorder.

"I am what I am. I'm sorry. I would give anything to be more emotional. I would much rather be like Tug McGraw and Gary Matthews and Pete Rose on the field, if I could only be like those guys and still be myself as a player. It just doesn't come out that way.

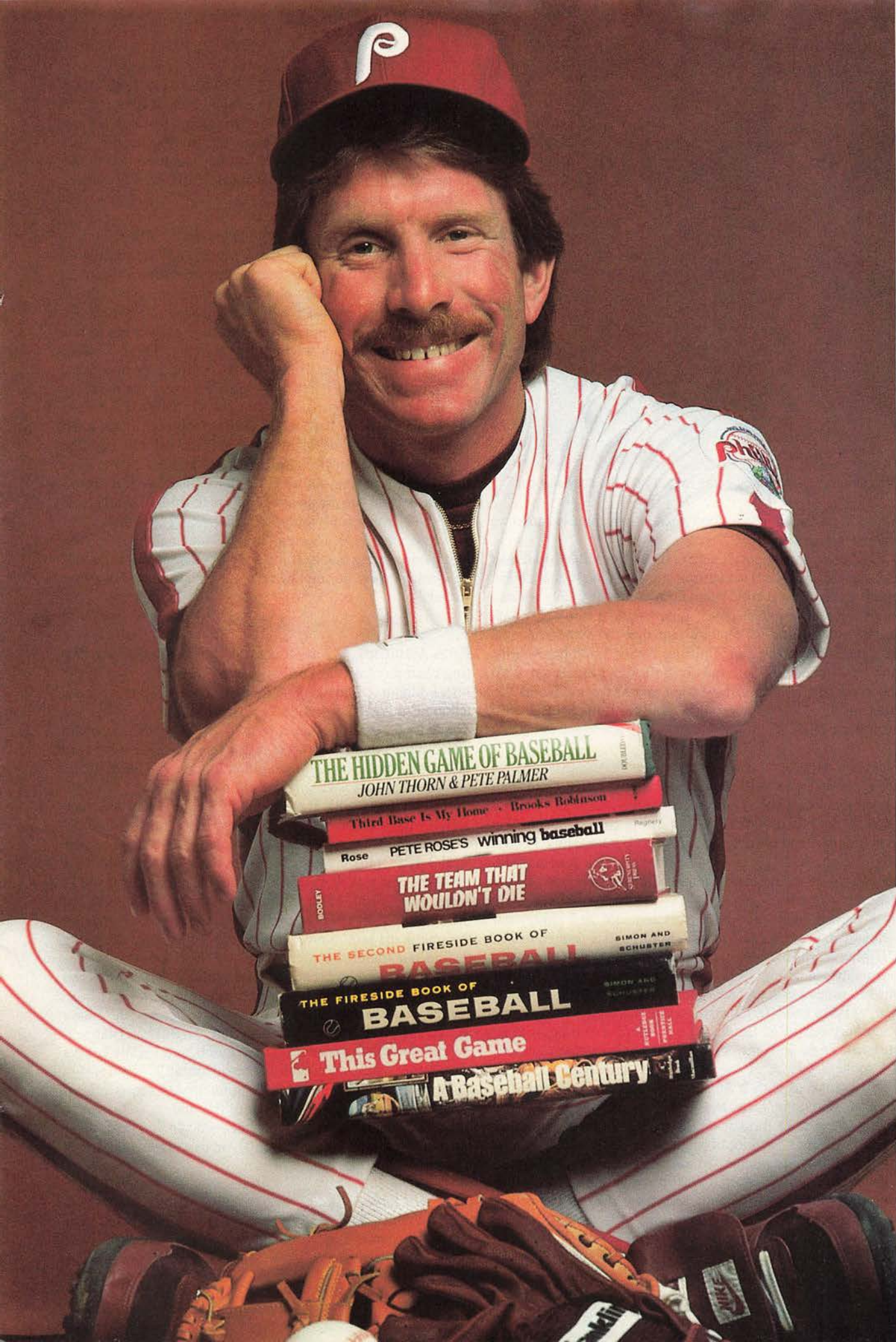
"In baseball, controlled aggressiveness is key, is very key. Especially with me. I have the option as a player of being emotional. I have the option of being a guy who shows everybody that he loves the game. But I choose to respect the opposition. It's hard enough to get a damn hit as it is, let alone having a guy mad at you. Any hitter who wants it different is crazy.

"Why do you think it's so hard for Joaquin Andujar to win? Because he incites the opposition. When I used to bat against him, I'm thinking, 'I don't care what, I'm going to first base somehow. He's not going to get me to flinch. I'm not bailing out.' I'll be right on everything he throws, just because I don't like the way he acts on the mound. Pascual Perez, he had the whole league hating him so bad he couldn't get anybody out.

"What people have to understand is that you don't have to have a bumper sticker on your car and a smile on your face all the time in order to love something. There's nobody that loves a base hit to right field with the bases loaded more than me, right? I force fed them the unemotional, nonchalant, ho-hum attitude about this game for so many years, people believe that about me. It's not true."



PAUL OWENS WAS MINOR LEAGUE DIRECTOR WHEN THE Phillies drafted Schmidt in 1971, in the second round. In 1972, as general manager, Owens traded an established player, Don Money, and handed Schmidt the starting job at third base. "We stayed with him," Owens says. "He ended up hitting 18 home runs for us that year [1973], struck out 136 times. We just played





"Any strong guy can hit 30 home runs. That's the easy way out."

him. Of course, it was a good year to play him because we weren't going anywhere.

"He's very intelligent. There're times I've kidded him over the years. I say, 'Mike, sometimes you think too much instead of just letting your natural talent flow.' When he finally realized he was one of the great power hitters—and I think that took maybe until '76 or '77 for him to realize that—then his goal was, instead of being happy hitting .285 with 35 home runs, now he wanted to hit .300 and do all the other things too. We'd try to explain to him, 'All we want you to do is drive in 115 runs and hit 35 homers. You do more for the team than you do hitting .300.'"

"I MADE THE DECISION TO BACK OFF OF HOME PLATE IN 1979 and that's when I really became a great hitter. I had been a perennial home-run champion and it really didn't mean that much to me because I felt like any strong guy could stand up to home plate and pull the ball and get 30 home runs. I could do that right now—get close to home plate, be a dead-pull hitter and hit 30 home runs. Don Baylor hits that way. That's the easy way out.

"I wanted to be like Roberto Clemente and spray that sonofabitch everywhere. I wanted to hit .300. I wanted to win a Triple Crown. Back then, I'm thinking along those lines and everybody's laughing: 'Who's this guy trying to kid? He strikes out 150 times a year and he's going to win the Triple Crown?' [Larry] Bowa and [Greg] Luzinski and those guys really made a mockery out of it. But I had my sights set on being even greater. I knew with my eyesight, my hand-eye coordination, if I could just find...I *knew* there was something out there.

"So I tinkered with it for a while. I made the decision to back off from home plate, get way off the plate and stride into it. You've got to be fundamentally right in order to stand that far away. There's not a lot of room for error. You can't be trying to pull outside pitches. In a given year, if I hit 30 to 35 home runs, I probably hit 18 to 20 straightaway and the other way. I hit with that style four, five, six years and hit well. I really believed in it."



THERE WOULD BE NO TRIPLE CROWN, BUT THERE WERE two MVPs, the second for a remarkable strike-interrupted performance in 1981, when Schmidt hit .316 and led the major leagues with 31 home runs and 91 RBIs in only 102 games. Early last season, mired in the worst extended slump of his career (.189, 5 home runs and 15 RBIs after 37 games), Schmidt retooled again.

"WHAT'S DIFFERENT NOW IS THE PITCHING. WHEN I FIRST came up there weren't that many overhand, 95-mph, rising-fastball pitchers. Everybody used to turn the ball over—sinker, slider—keep the ball down. Now I'm seeing more high fastballs. Dwight Gooden pitches up the whole game. They bring in Jeff Reardon, they bring in Rich Gossage, they bring in Lee Smith. I found myself waving up and under. The bat comes through, the ball rises a little, Mike Schmidt pops up and everybody boos. So I figure it's time for an adjustment.

"Well, to hit a high fastball you have to have the bat head above the ball. The ball's coming here [Schmidt makes a fist at letter level with his right hand] and the bat hits here [he raises his left forearm above his right shoulder and slashes downward, slapping his fist]. You have to sense, you almost have to feel that you exaggerate being above the ball. And before you know it you find yourself hitting rising line drives.

"I have what I call a 'swing thought,' my final thought prior to my mind going blank. If it's Dwight Gooden out there and he's ready to let go, my swing thought is, 'Get above that sucker!'"



RICH ASHBURN, A CAREER .308 HITTER AND TWO-TIME BATTING champion for the Phillies in the Fifties, is sitting in the home dugout at Veterans Stadium while the Phillies practice, talking about Mike Schmidt: "I always thought that if he were dumb, if he were stone dumb, he might be better off. He would just react to what he sees. He reacts very well. He has a very quick bat, quick hand-eye coordination. But Mike analyzes everything. Every swing. He sorts too much out.

"I think it was 1981. He thought he'd found—if there is such a thing—the secret to hitting. Now every hitter thinks that someday he's going to open the magic door and it's going to be there. Well, I don't think it ever is. It might be there—you might *think* it's there—for a week, two weeks, a couple of months if you're lucky. But I think Mike felt all his thinking had finally paid off, that he had found the perfect hitting style. And when he told me that I said to myself, 'Oh, oh. Someday you're going to find out there's no such thing.'

"I think he did find that out. And I think he was so shocked by that and so frustrated that he virtually had to start over. He has really worked hard at his hitting. I guess you'd have to conclude overall that it's paid off for him. But I've been telling him for years that he thinks too much, and I really believe that. I think he'd have been better off dumb."

Ashburn looks up and sees Schmidt loping across the infield, headed this way. At the top of the dugout steps, bat in hand, Schmidt pauses. Then he reaches down and pokes Ashburn in the chest with the barrel: "Don't say that shit, 'I think too much.'"

"AT THE SAME TIME THAT PEOPLE ARE ALL SITTING there thinking, 'The sonofabitch is going to think himself right out of this game,' I'm thinking how to become better. They know how easy it looks when I just walk up to home plate,

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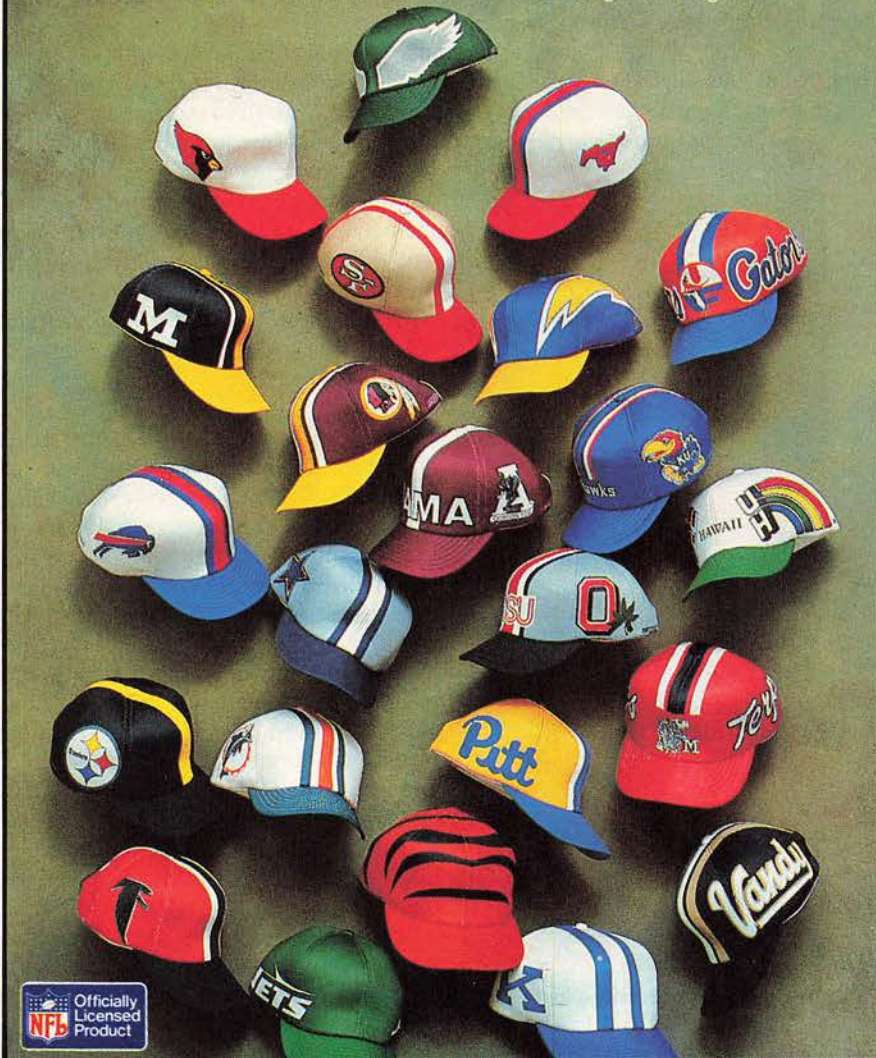
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just let it flow, right? But I need to do things that I think I need to do. We all need to do the things we think we need to do.

"As soon as I became aware that the opposition feared me and didn't want me to beat them, that they treated me a little special as a hitter, I understood I could be a weapon *because* they won't pitch to me. Look, I'm going up there and I'm going to get to first base. First of all, I'm going to give you a chance to walk me. I'm going to beat you on the base on balls until you *prove* that you can put the ball in the strike zone. And then when you put the ball in the strike zone, while you're proving that, I'm going to *whale* it. But I got to get these pitchers in the strike zone. I got to get them to know they got to throw me fastballs in the strike zone.

"Not swinging the bat is one of the most powerful weapons in baseball; the ability to walk up to home plate and take what that guy gives you. If the first pitch is a breaking ball for a ball or a strike, the pitcher's told me that he fears me with his fastball. He's also told me that later on in the at-bat, if the count would go to 3-and-1 or 3-and-2, I could expect the same pitch he threw me the first time because he has confidence he can throw it for a strike. It could be a slider or a curve or a changeup but he's told me, 'Hey, that's my best pitch.' And all I've done is just stand there.

"I've also given him an opportunity to throw a ball *that far* [Schmidt holds up his thumb and forefinger and squints] off the plate, his best curveball—*shew*—and the umpire calls it a ball. Man, the pitcher can't *believe* I didn't swing at it, he can't believe I didn't duck, he can't believe *something* didn't happen. But I just stood there.

"Now, obviously if I get him 1-0, my chances of guessing correctly on the next pitch improve. Now he's thinking, 'I gotta get more of the plate, I gotta throw the pitch I have the most confidence in.' And it will be, in 9 cases out of 10, a fastball.

"So now I can really look for my pitch. Hell, I can look for a slider if I want it and take the fastball. I'm free to do whatever I want if he throws ball one.

"If the first pitch is a strike he's even more predictable. Now he's gonna really throw some shit, now he's really gonna try and get me to chase something, show me something really off the wall, right?

"That's where a guy like Fernando [Valenzuela] is tough because he pitches backwards. He does strange things. Here's a guy that wants to strike you out on a hard screwball, right? But here's a guy that'll go, *voom*, fastball, *voom*, fastball, *bing, bing*, just like that. He'll throw you a fastball right out over the plate at the strangest times, when you *least* expect it. He throws me two hard screwballs and I wave at both of 'em and he goes, *voom*, fastball down the middle. The guys that pitch backwards are tough to figure out. But 90 percent of pitchers don't."

"MOST GUYS JUST HAVE A BASIC KNOWLEDGE of the game: keep it simple, do what you're supposed to do, execute, concentrate. But I've always thought there was another dimension that you could go to as a player. I've always felt there is something more out there.

"Okay, man on second, nobody out, guy chops the ball to first base. The first baseman fields the ball, touches first and there goes the runner—boop-boop-boop—over to third. The hitter's done his job, the runner's done his job and they got a man on third, one out.

"When I moved over to first base I thought, 'Hey, there's no way I'm letting that boy run over to third. I don't care how many first basemen have been letting him go over there for how many years. If I get a certain type of ground ball, I'm going to third.'

"First time I tried it I got a guy in Pittsburgh. And God, everybody went, 'Holy shit! Damn! I've never seen *that* before.' I tried it in St. Louis one more time and it worked again. How hard is it to backhand a ball and throw it diagonally?

"You know the old theory about guarding the line? End of the game, give 'em a single but don't give 'em a double? Well, there are a lot of pros and cons to that but I believe that with two outs in the *first, second and third* innings it's a good idea to guard the line.

"In the first third of the game, I think you should do everything you can to prevent the opposition from getting an easy run. The lead in a ballgame is the first determining factor—the first thing you have to try to do. As a defensive player, any way I can prevent that is important to my ballclub.

"Most guys would never even consider guarding the line in the first third of a ballgame. But if he hits a double, then one hit can score him. If he hits a single, it takes two hits or a home run to score him.

"Now, let's take that a step further. Let's say I know I don't want to give up the lead in the first third of the ballgame. That means I don't want to let a guy on third score an easy run on

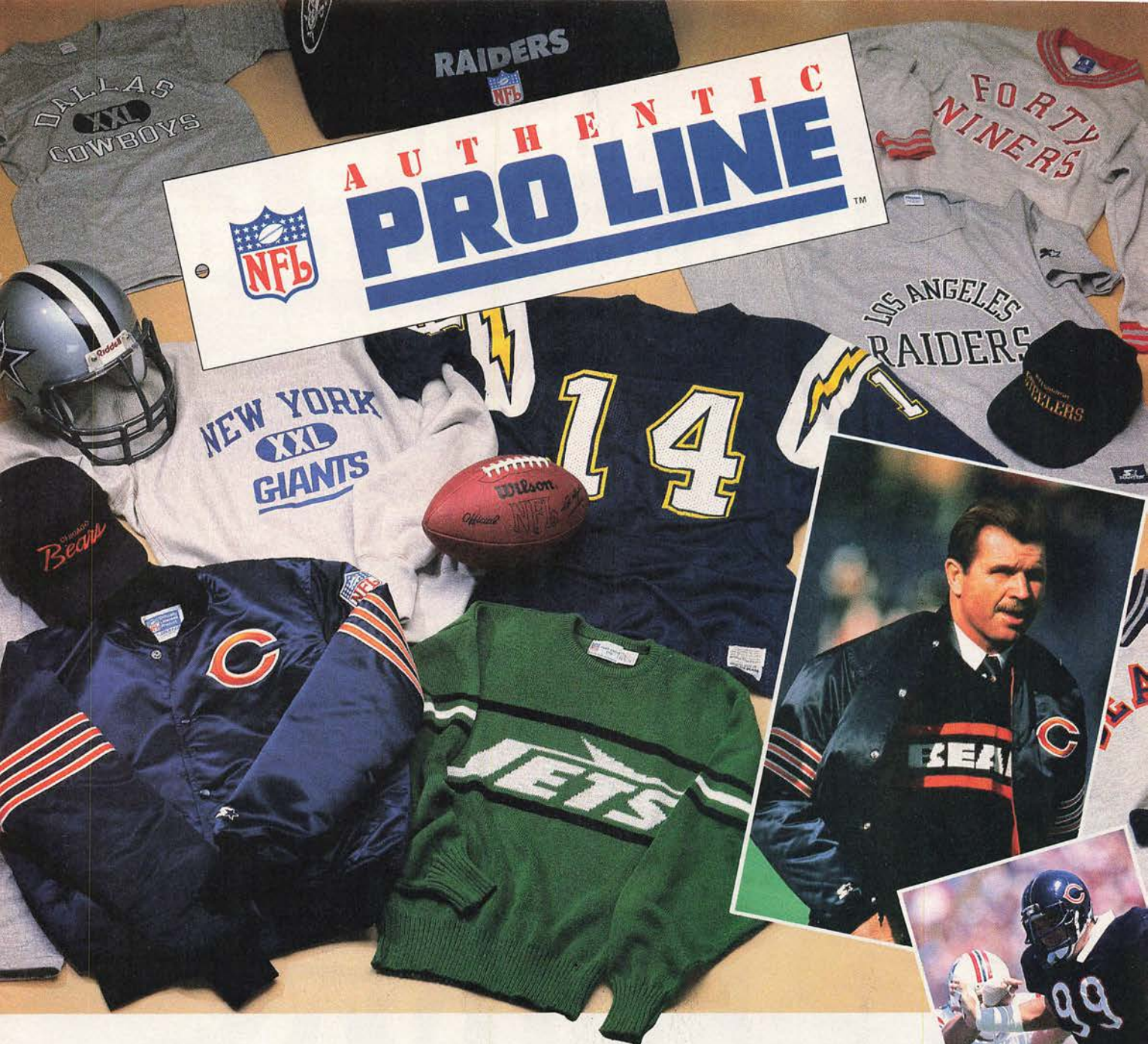
a ground ball to me at third base. Most third basemen will concede the run. You can just tell. But I'm a firm believer that the corner men should *never* concede the run. Why would the third baseman ever just lay back on a ground ball if there's nobody out or one out? What's an easier play than charging that ball on the run, catching it and throwing it to home?"

"I GET ACCUSED OF THINKING TOO MUCH but I can remember plays that I've made because I saw these plays in my mind before they happened. This was several years ago in Pittsburgh: two outs in the top of the thirteenth, tie ballgame. I'm on first and there's a man on second. Jim Bibby [righthanded] was the pitcher and Joe Lefebvre [lefthanded] was hitting. Bibby threw a wild pitch to Lefebvre and the runner on second took off for third. Now if I had taken off for second, which the book says to do, which everybody else would have done, they would have walked Lefebvre and brought up the righthanded hitter. As it turns out, Lefebvre hits a rocket single to left field and we win the game.

"Baseball is a game that needs to be studied in order to be appreciated. My love for the game is probably more from an analytical standpoint than in the actual execution. I feel like I'm going to make a good manager, a



"You don't have to have a bumper sticker on your car and a smile on your face to love something."



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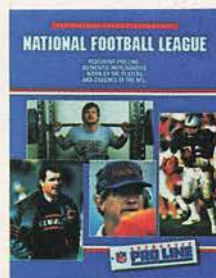


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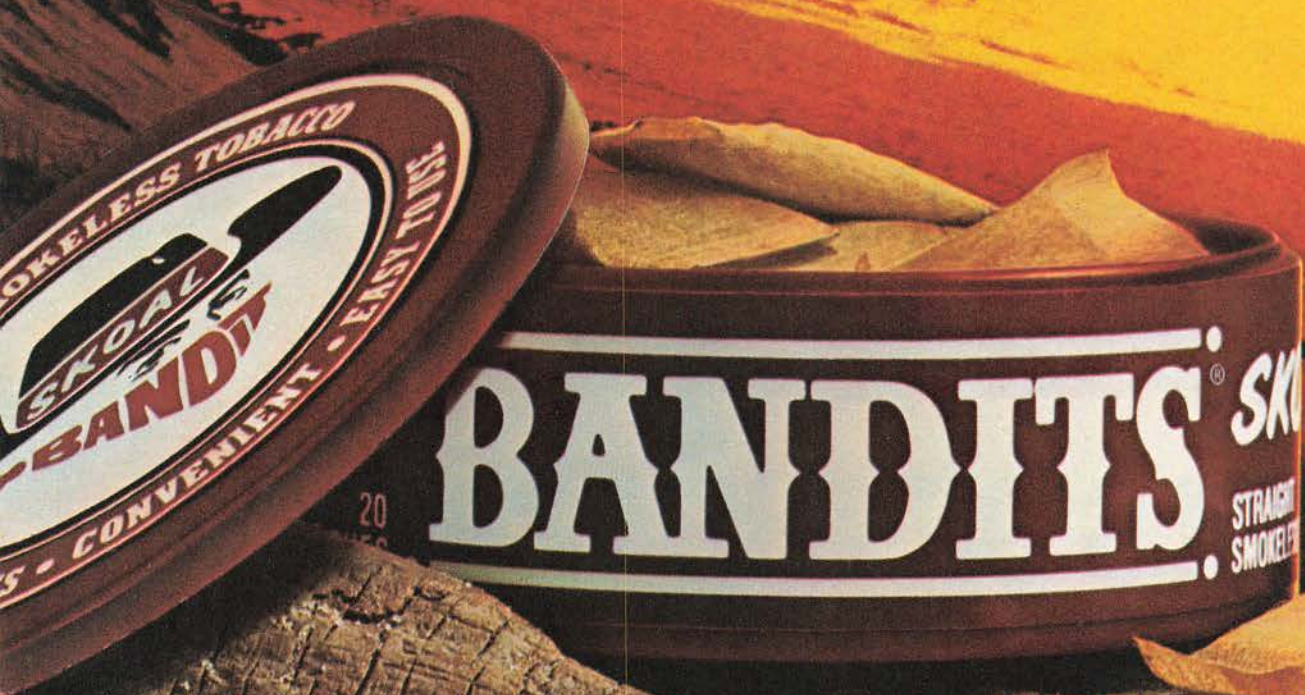


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good coach, behind-the-scenes guy, because my love for baseball is in the intricacies of the game.

"I have been grinding, *grinding* my way through this game. This has not been a breeze for me to punch this time clock every day for as long as I have. But I do get a great deal of satisfaction out of the work and the grinding and the thinking and the sweat; the time and effort and sometimes the inability to figure things out and other times the ability to figure them out the right way. That's where I get my satisfaction. That's what's fun for me.

"I don't want credit for that. If you find joy in the analytical side of life, you don't want much credit. You know what I'm saying? But I need—we all need sometimes—to know we're appreciated. One of my goals when I retire is to have somebody—*somebody, somewhere*—say, 'This guy knew the game. This guy was a smart baseball player.'"



"FUNNY THING ABOUT MIKE Schmidt," says Ashburn. "I've seen him, you know, from the day he came up. Everybody's always admired him, I think, and everybody's always respected him. Everybody's always thought he was a hell of a ballplayer. But almost everybody's always thought he should have been better."

The local reporter in the press box, for example. Second home game of the year, bases loaded, two outs, here comes Schmidt. "What's this?" the reporter says. "Schmidt's first choke of the year?" (Schmidt singled and two runs scored.)

Or the season-ticket holder who swears Schmidt only hits home runs when there's no one on base. (In fact he has 251 career solo home runs and 207 with men on base. Since 1975, when Elias Sports Bureau started keeping track, he has one every 15 at-bats with runners on base and one every 13.7 at-bats with the bases empty.)

"THE ONLY PLACE I'M EVER BOOED IS Philadelphia. Everywhere around the country I go, there's always applause and appreciation. Not that there isn't in Philadelphia, don't get me wrong. But the only time it's uncomfortable for me to play baseball is certain times when I'm not playing well—at Veterans Stadium.

"One night last year, I felt like it ain't worth \$2 million a year to have to work in this environment. I was nervous. There's no way I would have wanted my wife and kids to be in the stands. I feared for their lives.

"Another thing that's hurt me over the

years is just talking about it. Here I am talking about it, on tape. They must know that I hear it. They must know that it's an issue. That's fuel for the fans of Philadelphia. They can't wait to boo the shit out of me because, basically, I have the nerve to react to them.

"The thing about baseball is, everybody plays it. Dr. J never gets booed, no matter how bad he might be playing. Why is this? Because nobody can do what he does. All he's got to do is dunk a couple in the layup line before the game and your fantasies are fulfilled. He'll produce one spectacular move for you that you can't even fathom doing. It's your Walter Mitty fantasy to dunk a basketball, right? It's mine.

"When a fan goes to a baseball game, it's so hard for a player to fulfill his expectations. I'm just a robot in a pinstriped uniform to most fans. When they punch home run, it's supposed to come up. In a given night I might strike out twice and walk twice. Nothing. You came to the ballpark to see Mike Schmidt blast a couple of home runs, make a couple of great plays, right? And I've shown you nothing. And I'm making \$2 million a year. Do you believe that? You walk out of there

grumpy, talking about what an overpaid slob Mike Schmidt is.

"All I'm asking is *when* are they going to start giving this guy some credit? *What* do you have to do in this town for these people to stick with you through thick and thin? I just want a sense of unity. Give me a sense that you people are *with* me when I'm down.

"There's not much I can do about it, other than do my best on a daily basis and hope, and *hope* that I'm appreciated for that. At the end of my career, you just turn my baseball card over and that'll tell you what I've accomplished as a player. If the fans of Philadelphia don't appreciate that then they're not true fans."



"I FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN MISLABELED or miscast or misinterpreted by people. Whenever someone wants to do a national article on me, I always say, 'Damn, here's your chance to really tell people what you know, to give people a different impression than they might have of you.' And I get in trouble when I do that. I treat it just like a baseball game. I get in trouble for taking it too seriously, for wanting to accomplish too much." ★

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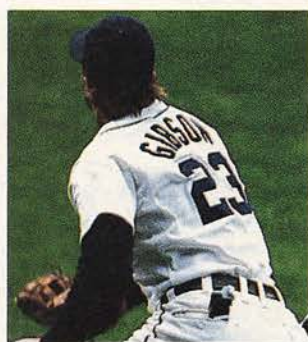
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BASEBALL'S MOST UNFORGIVING POSITION—RIGHT FIELD.



REGARD THE RIGHTFIELDER. Misunderstood and underrated, he's one of baseball's most enigmatic figures. In the sandlots he's either left out or last chosen. He's the little kid exiled from second base, the fat boy expelled from catcher, the slow boat moved over from center. Not until he reaches the majors

does he attain his singular stature: lord of sunlight and nightlight, master of carom and corner, longbowman with the on-target arm. Yet he remains little noted nor long remembered, number nine on our scorecards and last in our hearts.

Every so often baseball perks up and takes notice of the position. Such a year was 1984, when the Padres' Tony Gwynn led the majors in hitting, the Cubs' Keith Moreland and the Tigers' Kirk Gibson made critical playoff catches, and Gibson added a key throw and two decisive homers in the Series. And the hottest new player anywhere was a rightfielder. Guy named Hobbs. Roy Hobbs. They called him The Natural.

As it happens, naturals have long abounded in right field. There are 20 rightfielders in the Hall of Fame—more than any other position but pitcher. Among these immortals are Babe Ruth, Hank Aaron, Mel Ott, Paul Waner, Frank Robinson, Al Kaline and the peerless gloveman Roberto Clemente.

How could the weakest position in amateur ball become the strongest in major league history? "In organized ball you're going to have good hitters in right," says Kaline. "Up-the-middle players—catcher, second, short and center—concentrate on their fielding. The other players—first, third, left and right—can concentrate more on their hitting." The rightfielder usually makes baseball's longest throw—as long as 450 feet from deepest right to third in the old Polo Grounds. The player with the strongest arm should also hit for the most power.

But the explanation isn't all that pat. Tricky to learn and tough to play, right demands an especially resilient athlete. He makes more difficult throws than any other outfielder, and the throw is an outfielder's greatest challenge. "Catching a fly ball is a pleasure," Yankees great Tommy Henrich used to say, "but

knowing what to do with it after you make the catch is a business."

No one has to know—or do—more than a rightfielder. When a ball bounces near the line, for example, righthanded rightfielders must execute a back-to-the-plate pivot before throwing to second. All rightfielders must catch flies in perfect position to throw out runners tagging at second. "The rightfielder has to keep runners from advancing more than any other player does," says former Baltimore rightfielder Ken Singleton.

There is no outfield scene as taut and tense as the sight of a rightfielder charging a base hit as a runner rounds second. The pickup and pivot and peg must be perfect. When he succeeds, there's an epic, almost surreal quality to his throw. From Enos Slaughter cutting down Tuck Stainback in the 1942 Series to George Hendrick nabbing Robin Yount in 1982, rightfielders have made throws to third that resembled 300-foot clotheslines strung across the sky.



THE MASTER OF THE ART WAS CLEMENTE. As a high school player in Puerto Rico, he switched from shortstop to the outfield. When he was 18, the Dodgers were conducting a tryout at Sixto Escobar Stadium in San Juan. "The first thing I did was ask kids to throw from the outfield," says Al Campanis, the player personnel vice president of the Dodgers. "This kid Clemente throws a bullet from center, on the fly. 'Uno mas!' I shout, and he does it again." The Dodgers eventually signed Clemente for a \$10,000 bonus, left him unprotected on their Montreal farm club and lost him in the draft to the Pirates. As a big-league rightfielder from 1955 to 1972, he won 12 Gold Gloves and a National League record 5 assist titles. Players referred to his arm as El Bazooka.

"Orlando Cepeda of the Giants hit a line drive down the runway and past the bullpen, which was behind the stands and out of sight in Forbes Field," recalls Phil Dorsey, a Clemente confidant. "Roberto picked up the ball and threw blindly over the stands to get the runner, Willie Mays, at the plate. Damnedest play I ever saw on a ball field."

Clemente attributed his accuracy to throwing the javelin in high school and his strength to his mother. "She could throw

BY JIM KAPLAN



a ball from second to home with something on it," he once said. "I got my arm from her." Then he perfected it. "Roberto would set metal baskets on their sides at second and third," says Dorsey. "A coach would hit balls off the screen above the rightfield wall [in play], and Roberto would work for hours retrieving them and throwing them into the baskets."

"I've watched tapes of Clemente," says the Cardinals' Andy Van Slyke, one of the National League's best defensive rightfielders. "He loved it when a guy challenged him. I try to be like that. I always charge the ball. Sometimes I'll bobble it, and the runner will take an extra base. So what? If I hadn't been aggressive, he'd be there anyway. There's nothing like the outfielder who tells the runner, 'I dare you to run.'"

Hence, the profile of the ideal rightfielder: aggressive, confident, even cocky. When the Yankees' Rickey Henderson reaches first on a Toronto pitcher, he'll sometimes turn toward rightfielder Jesse Barfield, shake his legs and smile: I'm going. Barfield, who led all rightfielders with 22 assists in 1985,

Keith Moreland comes out of the corner firing.

responds by blowing on his index finger like a gunslinger clearing smoke from a six-gun: You're a dead man. "Some runners will tell me to back up and give them a chance," says Barfield. "I tell them, 'No way—don't even try.' " If they're foolish enough to go, Barfield is prepared. Before games he and shortstop Tony Fernandez play "long-toss," a 200-foot game of catch that helps them strengthen their arms and lengthen their throws. Barfield and centerfielder Lloyd Moseby also play a baseball-style "21" in which they throw to each other from 50 feet. "If he catches my throws at his belt buckle, I get one point," says Barfield. "Two for the chest, three for the head. You get in the habit of hitting the target."



THE CHALLENGING THROW ISN'T ALL THAT ENNOBLES the rightfielder. It's accepted that fly balls come relatively straight at centerfielders but tend to hook or slice toward the

line in right or left. Well, the English on the ball can be considerably weirder for a rightfielder than a leftfielder. Most balls hit to leftfielders are thrown by righthanders and batted by righthanders. When the pitcher throws the ball, it's likely to come at a batter with a left-to-right spin; the batter hits it with a right-to-left motion. The ball may still move crazily off the bat, but the countervailing movements are likely to straighten it out a bit. Balls hit to right are usually thrown by righthanders and hit by lefthanders; two left-to-right actions producing wicked hooks. "It comes at you like a banana," says Detroit rightfielder Pat Sheridan.

But not always. "The ball doesn't curve toward the line every time, because some righthanded hitters can drive it up the gap," says Keith Moreland. Adds Boston's Dwight Evans: "Three batters would give me fits. Tony Oliva's drives would hook or sink or rise over my head—he made me feel like a fool. Cecil Cooper hits balls that take off to my right; you don't see that from other lefthanded hitters. Graig Nettles would hit balls with topspin and bite. I'd think they'd be easy catches and I'd wind up diving."

No wonder rightfielders work so hard at getting a jump on the ball. "My speed wasn't a factor in my fielding—my jump was," says Rusty Staub, who played right for much of his 23-year big-league career. "When I came up to the Astros, a coach, Jim Busby, taught me how to get a jump. He'd hit me line drive after line drive from 150 feet. Eventually I'd learn how to see the ball off the bat. Then Busby would lengthen out his hits. I also did everything I could to know the pitchers and hitters. I'd talk to the catcher about how he'd call the game, and while it was in progress I'd get signals from the catcher, shortstop or second baseman."

The rightfielder's worst enemy may be boredom. Since he touches the ball less often than anyone else—most hitters are righthanded—he constantly fights the urge to daydream. "I expect the ball to be hit to me 27 times a game," says Van Slyke. "That's how I keep my head in the game. I keep asking myself questions: 'If the ball's hit down the line, is Keith Hernandez or Mookie Wilson running?' I keep going over situations that might happen. That way I won't be surprised."

Newcomers to right are invariably amazed at how difficult the position can be. Oddly, the least intimidated switchtees tend to be those from the most dissimilar position: catcher. Says Moreland, who moved from behind the plate to right full-time in 1983, "It helped that I'd played in a position where I had to concentrate all the time. In right, you might go four games without a chance, but then you might get one with a game on the line." Moreland now feels at home in Wrigley, one of the most pernicious—and the only perennial—sun field. Brewer rightfielder Charlie Moore, another converted catcher, says, "I keep awake by talking either to myself or my centerfielder: 'I'll cheat toward the line, so come by me.' As catcher I used to go crazy seeing balls drop in front of the outfielders. As a result, I play in close and work on the fewer balls that are hit over my head. I also have a pretty good idea how we'll pitch the hitters. I look where our catchers are setting up, and I guess what they're calling. As I guess, I cheat a little to my left or right."

All rightfielders share the awareness that theirs can be an unforgiving position. Waiting for plays—and, remember, they wait longer than anyone in the game—they wonder what will go wrong. And something unfortunate, even ludicrous, happens all too often.

Kirk Gibson, after being tutored by Al Kaline, made an excellent throw to help the Tigers win the first 1984 Series game.

WHO IS THE BEST?

Who are the best in baseball at the outfield's most demanding position? We asked a panel of experts—veteran major league scouts Jim Russo, Howie Haak and Dan Carnevale plus broadcaster Tony Kubek—to rate the top rightfielders in both leagues. Players were ranked from one (fair) to five (excellent) in arm strength, accuracy and fundamentals, range and their ability to play walls and corners and artificial surfaces.

Our experts are quick to point out that a rightfielder's reputation can also serve as a crucial deterrent. "It's like pitching against Kansas City and saying, 'I don't want George Brett to beat me,'" says nonvoting panelist Bobby Valentine, whose experience as a manager and third base coach spans both leagues. "You don't want a rightfielder with a good rep throwing your runner out."

Here, then, are the best rightfielders in the game.

Dave Winfield, Yankees. One scout gave him perfect marks across the

board: "He's been the best for years." Winfield moved back to his original position last year and won his fourth straight Gold Glove after establishing himself as baseball's best wall climber in Yankee Stadium's difficult left field. Russo attributes Winfield's 13 assists in 1985 to the fact that "he has a stronger and more accurate arm in right than he had in left. I can't explain how it happens, but Frank Robinson was like that, too."

Dwight Evans, Red Sox. Perennial Gold Glove, though he "has the toughest right field to play," says one panelist. Evans makes up in accuracy and solid fundamentals what he lacks in arm strength. Though not a speedster, he rates an "excellent" for range because he "gets a great jump on the ball."

Jesse Barfield, Blue Jays. Led majors in assists last year (22). Barfield plays a shallow right, "but has more range than Winfield to get to those balls," says one panelist. His arm is "as strong and accurate as anyone's in base-

R A T I N G S		WALLS & ANGLES	ARM STRENGTH	ACCURACY & FUND.	RANGE	PLAYING TURF	INTIMIDATION	TOTAL
18.5 TO 20 EXCELLENT								
16.5 TO 18 ABOVE AVERAGE								
14.5 TO 16 AVERAGE								
14 OR LESS FAIR								
A M E R I C A N L E A G U E								
Dave Winfield • Yankees		17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	20	107.5
Dwight Evans • Red Sox		17.5	17	18.5	16.5	15	20	104.5
Jesse Barfield • Blue Jays		17	18	17	16.5	17	17.5	103
Harold Baines • White Sox		15.5	14.5	14	14.5	14.5	15.5	88.5
Mike Davis • A's		14.5	14.5	13.5	15.5	15	14.5	87.5
Tom Brunansky • Twins		13.5	16	14	12	13.5	15.5	84.5
N A T I O N A L L E A G U E								
Andre Dawson • Expos		17	16.5	16.5	15	18	19.5	102.5
Darryl Strawberry • Mets		15.5	18.5	12.5	16.5	17	17.5	97.5
Andy Van Slyke • Cardinals		15	15.5	15	16	16.5	16	94
Glenn Wilson • Phillies		14.5	17	15	13.5	13.5	18	91.5
Dave Parker • Reds		14	15.5	15.5	14.5	14.5	15.5	89.5
Tony Gwynn • Padres		13	12	13	14	13	13	78

Players are ranked from 1 to 5 in each category by four panelists.



Darryl Strawberry: Potentially the best but he's not there yet.

ball." One expert urged, "Give him a five for reputation—no, wait, compared to Winfield, he's a four and a half."

Andre Dawson, Expos. Won a Gold Glove in his first full season in right last year. "At one time," observes a scout, "he was a five in everything, but those knees have hurt his range. When he's healthy, he's the best." After nine years in Olympic Stadium, "he's one of the best in playing the turf."

Darryl Strawberry, Mets. If his fundamentals were sounder, he'd be the best in the NL. "Often he's outstanding," says Valentine. "When he catches the ball with his glove-foot forward, there's nobody quicker. But at times, he doesn't concentrate." Another panelist adds that "for a young guy, Straw plays walls and angles quite well." Strawberry is still weak on diving for balls to his side, especially to his left, but "probably has the best arm in the game."

Andy Van Slyke, Cardinals. Even the experts don't always agree. "He's one of those guys with the range to play center," asserts one panelist. "If he'd hit a little more, he'd be one of the top players in baseball." But "he times too many balls over his head, instead of getting set to catch them," demurs another. "He's also not as quick charging a ground ball as he could be. For my money, he's not one of the best in the league."

Dave Parker, Reds. No longer the superstar who gunned down runners in the '79 All-Star Game, but not the "bum" he was during his last years in Pittsburgh, when, one scout says, "I'd have given him twos in everything." Another adds, "He still misses the cut-off man a lot, his range has gone

from exceptional to average, his arm strength from very good to good. But even now, he's still a pretty good rightfielder."

Glenn Wilson, Phillies. Last season, he led the league in assists (18) and errors (12) with 373 chances. As one scout points out, "A lot of assists can mean that you've got an average arm and everybody's running on you. But Wilson's got one of the best arms around. He doesn't run too well, though, and needs to improve his play on the turf."

Tony Gwynn, Padres. The enigma of the ratings. Despite a .989 fielding percentage, 14 assists and 355 chances in '85, Gwynn was considered a mediocre rightfielder by some panelists. "His arm is below average," says one. "He's also not that good at charging ground balls on grass." Adds another, "He really ought to be in left, but they've got Carmelo Martinez there and he's worse." The positives? "Good foot speed, outstanding release, accurate arm, as much range as Strawberry and even though he plays mostly on grass, he's good on turf."

Best of the Rest. Harold Baines (White Sox), "steady, but unspectacular." Mike Davis (A's), "a comer." Tom Brunansky (Twins) had 14 assists in '85 and "his arm is respected around the league." All agree that, based on his centerfield play, Chili Davis (Giants) will rate up with Van Slyke and Wilson before too long. The most disparaged rightfielder? Kirk Gibson (Tigers). His speed gives him above-average range, but "his arm is weak and not accurate," moans one scout. "If he wasn't making so much money, he'd be a DH."

—Stephen Hanks

"A year ago I would have thrown a screwball," he said. A day later Gibson made two errors. Tony Gwynn spent the 1984 season building a reputation as a competent fielder. Then he helped allow the go-ahead run in the final Series game by losing a fly ball in the lights. In 1982, Moreland dove for a ball, got up and couldn't find it. The ball was lying in his cap. It could have happened anywhere; it happened in right.

Back in 1932, Hall of Fame centerfielder Hack Wilson was winding down his career as a rightfielder with Casey Stengel's Brooklyn Dodgers. The hard-drinking Wilson, "hung over like a cornice," in the words of the late Red Smith, was running

down line drives hit off Brooklyn's appropriately named Boom-Boom Beck. Each time Stengel visited the mound to change pitchers, Beck talked him out of it.

Finally, after one line drive too many, Stengel stormed to the mound and demanded the ball. Furious beyond words, Beck wheeled and threw it to deep right. Wilson, who had been leaning against the fence and dozing, heard the familiar rattle of ball against fence. He wheeled, fielded the carom and fired a strike to second. "That was the best throw Hack made all year," Stengel said later. Wilson could have been hung over anywhere; he was hung over in right.



BY ALL ODDS, RIGHT FIELD HAS THE MOST COLORFUL history of any outfield position. At first, it was the weakest spot on the diamond. There were few lefthanded batters, and pitchers threw so slowly that most balls were hit to center or left. The man placed in right was often the "change" pitcher, an early term for reliever, since teams were forbidden to substitute from the bench. Hall of Fame pitcher Old Hoss Radbourn spent an afternoon in right and won an 18-inning game with a homer.

Another oddity: Right tended to be the "short" field and shallow-situated rightfielders could always hope for 9-3 assists. On June 12, 1880, Worcester rightfielder Lon Knight threw to first baseman Chub Sullivan to retire Cleveland batter Bill Phillips and help J. Lee Richmond throw baseball's first perfect game. The 9-3 phenomenon faded in the Sixties, when outfields became much larger, though the Cardinals' Van Slyke reprised it in spring training this year, throwing out former Atlanta pitcher Len Barker on a one-hop liner.

In 1891, free substitutions were permitted, and teams stopped using pitchers in right. One of the leading rightfielders of the time, the Phillies' Big Sam Thompson, changed outfield play forever by perfecting the one-bounce throw home; previously, outfielders usually threw only as far as the infield. The Red Sox' Harry Hooper, probably the best fielding rightfielder of the first half of the century, set an unofficial mark for his position with 344 career assists and invented the "rump-slide," in which he threw himself to the ground on one hip, feet forward, knees bent, while catching short fly balls.

The most controversial play in World Series history took place in right. With Washington leading Pittsburgh 4-3 in the eighth inning of the third 1925 game, the Senators' Sam Rice vaulted into the temporary bleachers of old Griffith Stadium to take a homer away from Pirate catcher Earl Smith. Rice remained in the stands for some time before emerging with the ball. Enraged, the Pirates and their owner, Barney Dreyfuss, charged

SPORTS FILE



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onto the field to claim that Rice had dropped the ball and had it handed to him by a friendly fan. Their protest was not upheld by the umpire, but the debate would rage for some 50 years. In 1965, Rice gave the Hall of Fame a sealed letter to be opened upon his death. He died in 1974. In the letter, Rice said he had had a "death grip" on the ball but while falling into the stands "hit my Adam's Apple or something, which sort of knocked me out for a few seconds. At no time," Rice insisted, "did I lose possession of the ball."

At no time did the thrills slacken in right. The selfless Kaline once made a game-saving catch while breaking his shoulder. Heartbreak? To many students of right there's none greater than seeing the late Roger Maris left out of the Hall. Forget about his seven World Series, two Most Valuable Player awards and one asterisk: He was a great defensive rightfielder. Just ask Willie Mays, deprived of a game-tying RBI in the last inning of the 1962 Series, when Maris went into the corner to cut off his double.

If right field torments, it can also bless. The normally lead-footed Lou Piniella somehow came up with two critical plays in the Yankees' epic 1978 playoff victory over the Red Sox. First, he made a running grab that robbed Fred Lynn of a double, and then he feigned the catch of a Jerry Remy fly he'd lost in the sun. Another habitual cold glove, the Mets' Ron Swoboda, made the diving catch that saved game four of the 1969 World Series.



THE GREATEST CATCH OF THE GREATEST game in recent World Series history, however, was made by Boston's Dwight Evans, the nonpareil rightfielder of the post-Clemente era and possibly the last of a noble breed.

The old right fields had varying dimensions, screens, fences, walls, funny angles and crazy caroms. And because the ball moved slowly on grass, the rightfielder of yore was better known for the quality of his arm than his speed. The new parks usually have artificial turf, walls 8 to 12 feet high and uniform dimensions (typically, 330 feet to the poles and 400 to dead center). True, the turf forces the rightfielder to station himself deeper than he'd like to and continue to make long throws. However, the carpet also creates faster hits up the gaps. When most managers are forced to choose between fast legs and strong arms—they're

tempted to opt for speed.

The 1985 Royal and Cardinal outfielders, to name two, were stocked end to end with players of centerfield speed. Oh, there are still some rightfielders built along the classic lines—Minnesota's Tom Brunansky, Cincinnati's Dave Parker and Toronto's Barfield spring to mind—but they're wasted on phony turf. For an old-fashioned rightfielder and an old-fashioned right field, we look to Evans.

Like his distinguished predecessors—among them Hooper, Jimmy Piersall and Jackie Jensen—Evans has grown accustomed to playing baseball's toughest right field. In Fenway, right is a sinister sun field—especially so since the rays shine in a fielder's eyes over the low grandstand. There are hockey-style caroms off a curved corner, or "belly," beginning 302 feet from the plate and extending to 380. The rightfield fence never rises to



Dwight Evans: Sizing up the shot.

6 feet, so balls are more likely to be over it than off it. And there's virtually no foul ground, so any ball hit a rightfielder's way is likely to be trouble. Nonetheless, Evans learned to play right so well he once went 191 consecutive games without making an error.

Consider him in practice. Other players are clowning around, standing in groups with their hats on backwards, making off-balance catches, throwing their gloves at the ball. Evans practices the way he plays. A coach hits him 10 minutes of grounders and he comes up throwing with each. "You have to charge the ball, slow up a little before you get to it, and try to get a good hop," he

says. "Then make a curve around the ball, so that you're lined up in the direction you want to throw." Evans makes the play as well as he talks it. "Nobody ever goes from first to third on Dwight Evans," former American League player Enos Cabell once said. "Never has, never will."

Now Evans is getting 10 minutes of fly balls. He glides for the ball and catches it two-handed, with his body lined up toward his target. Textbook. Why shouldn't he have been the man of the moment in the 1975 Series' unforgettable sixth game?

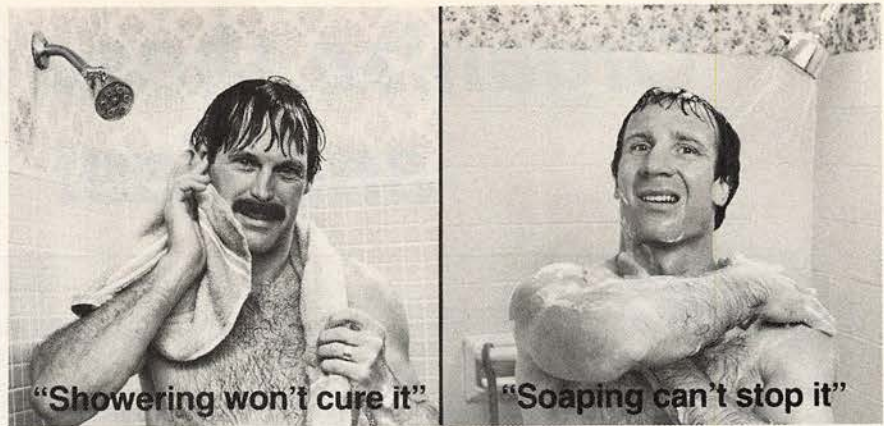
IN THE ELEVENTH INNING, CINCINNATI's Ken Griffey was leading off first when Joe Morgan stepped in against Dick Drago. Second baseman Denny Doyle flashed a signal to Evans: breaking ball. Immediately, Evans felt dread—he'll probably pull the ball and hit it over my head. And, sure enough, Morgan produced an outfielder's nightmare—a liner streaking over Evans's head like a guided missile, with some left-to-right English thrown in.

Unlike the flashy players who misjudge balls, get late starts and have to dive, Evans prides himself on making his best catches look easy. Sizing up the shot, he retreated quickly, eyes on the ball, leaped and stabbed it at the warning track. "Given its significance," said shocked Cincinnati manager Sparky Anderson, "it was one of the two greatest catches ever made."

But like all great outfielders, Evans wasn't satisfied with making the catch. "I think my best plays have been good throws," he says. "Making a good throw gives me the same feeling as hitting a homer." Bouncing off the wall and throwing toward a crowd of Boston uniforms in the infield, Evans didn't make his best throw. No matter; his quick release more than atoned for his imperfect aim. First baseman Carl Yastrzemski caught the ball some 25 feet from the bag and relayed to shortstop Rick Burleson, who had crossed the diamond to reach first well ahead of Griffey. It was a 9-3-6 double play if you're scoring, and a play that had fans, television viewers and even sportswriters embracing and shouting, if you're remembering.

It could have happened anywhere; it happened in right. ★

Jim Kaplan's book Fielder's Choice, from which this piece is adapted, will be published next spring by Algonquin Books.



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SPORT QUIZ

Answers from page 77. 1—a. 2—Chuck Tanner. 3—c (in 1971, he fanned 301, but Mickey Lolich struck out 308). 4—Darrell Evans. 5—c. 6—K.C. Jones (Boston) and Matt Guokas (Philadelphia). 7—Dallas Cowboys, Miami Dolphins and New England Patriots. 8—a-2, b-3, c-1, d-4. 9—Cincinnati Reds, Boston Red Sox, Chicago Cubs and New York Giants. 10—San Diego Padres. 11—b. *Answer to last month's Stumper* (During the 1981 strike-shortened baseball

season, only one pitcher in American professional baseball won 20 games. Name the pitcher, the teams he pitched for and the team he plays for now): In 1981, Ted Power went 18-3 during the regular season with the Dodgers' farm club at Albuquerque, added another win in the playoffs and then joined the Dodgers in September in time to post his twentieth victory of the year. Power is now an ace reliever with the Cincinnati Reds.

PICTURE CREDITS

Page 5—Clockwise from top: John McDonough, Rich Pilling, John McDonough, Focus on Sports, Peter Travers. 11—Focus on Sports (top right), Miller-O'Brien. 12—Red Morgan (left), All-Sport/Trevor Jones. 16—David L. Johnson (top and bottom right), John McDonough (bottom left). 25—John McDonough (top right), David Walberg (center left), Rich Pilling (bottom right). 26,27—John McDonough (3). 28—David Walberg. 29,35—John McDonough. 36,37—Peter Travers (left), Bill Ballen-

berg. 39—Rick Stewart/Focus West. 42—Peter Travers. 47—Rich Pilling. 51—David Walberg. 52—Scott Mlyn. 53—John McDonough. 54—Focus on Sports (left), John McDonough. 56—David Walberg. 57—Boyd Hagen/Camera 5. 58—Rich Pilling. 60—Focus on Sports. 64,65—David Walberg (2). 67,68—John McDonough. 71—From top: All-Sport, All-Sport/David Cannon, All-Sport/Trevor Jones. 73—Rick Warner/Michael Costello. 74—John Hillery. 77—John McDonough (4).

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WIRED

A GRINGO'S GUIDE TO THE WORLD CUP



Can two and a half billion people all be wrong? Perhaps, but not this month. The XIII World Cup soccer tournament, being held in Mexico from May 31 to June 29, will capture the attention of the globe. Soccer, especially in the next few weeks, is the world's biggest sport.

This year, you'll have plenty of opportunities to see what the fuss is about. In the widest coverage ever in the U.S., NBC is televising 7 matches, including the final, and SIN, the Spanish language network, is showing all 52 matches. (Though SIN is broadcast in Spanish, its coverage is excellent—and there are no commercials.)

Soccer on TV is highly watchable, especially at the world-class (rather than the dehydrated NASL) level. It is best appreciated for its nuances, rather than its goal scoring. (A typical game is low scoring; two goals are often enough to win.) But like a long pass that doesn't produce a TD, or an explosive move to the hoop that ends in a blocked shot, play in soccer offers lots of scoreless thrills. The dribbling and passing can be ingenious, the speed electrifying and the acrobatics, especially by goaltenders, brilliant.

This year's tournament offers several unusual subplots. In the past, the home-continent teams, if you will, have dominated. No European team has ever won the Cup in this hemisphere and only one Latin squad (the '58 Brazil team, with a 17-year-old Pele) has won in Europe. But this Cup is too close to call. "At least 12 of the 24 teams have the same chance," says England manager Bobby Robson. "This has never happened before." Handicappers have further problems because the horrendous climatic conditions—heat, smog, high altitude—make Mexico about the worst place possible to hold the tournament.

The 24-team field is divided into 6 groups. The top two finishers in each group plus the four best third-place teams qualify for the single-elimina-

tion Sweet Sixteen round. Of NBC's three early round matchups, the first, **Italy vs. Bulgaria (Sat., May 31)** is the least attractive. Defending champ Italy, a sorry 10-8-8 since its '82 victory, has been hurt by injuries to Paolo Rossi, the star of the last World Cup.

A more fascinating and potentially explosive game pits **Brazil vs. Spain (Sun., June 1)**. Brazil is a flairful, attacking outfit, especially if elderly stars like Zico and Socrates stay healthy. And Spain has been sizzling of late, led by striker Emilio "The Vulture" Butragueno and defender Goicoechea, "the Butcher of Bilbao."

West Germany vs. Scotland (Sun., June 8) pits a fun-to-watch German team against the quirky Scots, a club that plays tough against the world's best but loses to weaklings. The Germans have brilliant players like goalie Toni Schumacher, perhaps the best against penalty shots, and scorers Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, Pierre Littbarski and Rudi Voller.

Among the other early round matches, available on SIN, one of the most exciting and crucial should be **Denmark vs. Uruguay (Sun., June 8)**. The Danes, first-time finalists, were seeded in the "weak-entry" category, but with eight of their starters playing for top clubs all over the world, they might be the sleeper in the tournament. Denmark has the top pair of strikers (Michael Ladrup and Preben Elkjaer-Larsen) and perhaps the most skillful midfield in the world.

Among the six round-robin groups, the most interesting could be group F, whose games will be held in Monterrey. Everyone wanted to avoid this smoggy, hot (110 degrees possible at game times) and low-lying city. The English team, which irritated the locals with some poor PR during the 1970 Mexican Cup, were not surprised to find themselves placed there. Poland, nondescript between Cups but clutch here, and Portugal, a pretty, improvisational club, should give Britain a run.

Other teams to watch during the tournament include Argentina and its star, Diego Maradona, the superb midfielder; France, with its own star, Michel Platini, an unselfish midfielder who runs the team like an orchestra conductor; Paraguay, featuring old Cosmos friends Cabanas and Romero; and the USSR, with the world's top goaltender, Rinat Dasaev. —Tom Kertes



Thrill of the feet: Watch for Brazil's skill (top), Maradona's magic (center) and the anxiety at the goal mouth.



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V I D E O

LIGHTS...CAMERA... THAT'S MY BOY...ACTION



Some scenes from a home movie: a 12-year-old batter connects; the picture blurs to blindness. A play at the plate is missed; the camera is focused on Junior, alone in right. A runner rounds the bases; the image bounces enough to cause motion sickness.

If this sounds like the film record of your Little League days, fear not: The age of videocassette recorders, mercifully, makes it easy to shorten that list of your father's film flops. With the right equipment, it's not so difficult to put together a sports movie that is both entertaining and instructive.

If you don't already own a video camera, your best bet is to buy a camcorder. This unit, which combines camera and recorder in one sleek, lightweight package, is available in Beta, mini-VHS, full-size VHS and 8mm varieties. Look for special features, like automatic focus and lighting, color balance and built-in microphones.

The better camcorders cost between \$1,200 and \$1,500. The RCA CLR200 ProWonder, JVC VideoMovie GR-C1, Sony Handycam, Olympus VX-402 VHS and Canon VM-E1 8mm are highly recommended by experts.

Of course, the equipment alone won't give your home sports movies a major league look. To this end, we asked a pair of experts from NBC's *Baseball Game of the Week* telecasts, cameraman Eric Eisenstein and producer Kenneth Edmundson, for some inside information.

Not so fast: "The first rule of thumb," says Eisenstein, "is to avoid the constant starting and stopping with every play. Leave what we call a 'pad,' some room before and after a pitch. It gives the viewer time to think about what's coming next."

Eisenstein also encourages you to stay with the kids' reactions after a play, and to show what's going on between pitchers and batters. "Those are often cute," he says, "the things you laugh at most 10 years from now."

Stay Wide, Part I: Follow this advice

and you'll never sit through a herky-jerky home movie again. "The wider your take," says Eisenstein, "the less shaky your legs and camera will be." From a dugout angle, your viewfinder should include the batter from head to toe, as well as the catcher and umpire.

"Too many people are 'zoom crazy,'" says Eisenstein. Getting a tighter shot may be tempting, but it's difficult to follow the action with just one camera. NBC employs six cameras on a typical Saturday, switching among them up to 30 times during each at-bat.

Stay Wide, Part II: Once the ball is hit, you want to maintain a broad perspective, rather than try a quick pan to show where the ball travels. "You're better off showing the batter running to first," says Eisenstein. "The runner is going to tell the story."

Studying the Films: Though videotaping should be for fun, both Edmundson and Eisenstein say there's room for instruction. "The kids are looking to laugh with the tapes," says Edmundson, "but they also look closely at themselves when they're at the plate."

"A straight-on shot can show if your kid is swinging too late or early, under or over, and whether the weight is shifting correctly," says Eisenstein. "Think about shooting from the outfield fence. You can see how the kids react to the ball coming off the bat."

Variety is the spice of life: "Get more than one angle," says Ken Edmundson, who speaks from the direct experience of taping his two ballplaying sons. "Shoot some footage from first base, third base and maybe behind the plate."

Edmundson also suggests getting some "atmosphere" in your Little League video. "I used to isolate too much on my own sons," he says. "Now I get shots of teammates' play and the bench. My sons have friends come over to watch the tapes; if all the guys are included, they really enjoy it."

Edmundson is also apt to sneak in a favorite "lesson." "I sometimes cut to an irate parent who is screaming at his kid," Edmundson explains. Sometimes, it's better to direct movies than star in them.

—Bob Condor



FANTASY

PLAYING THE OPEN'S TOUGHEST COURSE



Standing on the first tee of the Shinnecock Hills Golf Club, in Southampton, NY, you can almost feel the weight of history. This was the first formally organized golf club in the

United States. Although golf was played earlier in this country elsewhere, the club's original 12 holes—built in 1891 by Willie Dunn and 150 Indians from the Shinnecock reservation—formed the first golf course that would have been recognizable to a visiting Scotsman.

Shinnecock is the closest thing we have in this country to the linksland courses of the British Isles—the constant wind coming off the Atlantic, which is less than two miles away, the rolling terrain that can deflect even the best shots in unexpected directions, the brambles and grape vines and high grass that lurk just a few yards off most fairways. But the greatest similarity to St. Andrews and other British courses is that this one, unlike most American golf courses, rests so naturally on the land. It appears to have always been here, as if the land

Shinnecock Hills, site of the U.S. Open: A touch of the old sod in the new world



had just been waiting for someone to come along to place tee markers and punch holes.

Add the fact that 90 years ago Shinnecock Hills hosted the second U.S. Open—and that on June 15 some Tom, Jack or Fuzzy will walk away with our national championship in the eighty-sixth Open—and you may understand why I topped my drive off the first tee. I blame it on the weight of history.

The big guys will have their difficulties here, too, unless the wind decides not to blow. Shinnecock Hills was designed to be played in the wind, which normally comes from the south; the long holes are played with it, the short ones against it. On holes 9 and 18, which play across the wind, errant tee shots can be blown into weeds and brambles deep enough to lose your feet in.

The wind will be the constant hazard, but the traps will provide the occasional hell. Hunkered down below the level of the fairway or cut into the base of the hill to the green, the traps have two functions: to swallow your ball and to piss you off.

The key to this year's Open will be the par-4's, of which there are two more at Shinnecock than on a standard course. On several of the par-4's, like holes 3, 12, 13 and especially 15, the boys will be banging the ball. The tee at 15 is at least 150 feet above the fairway and it is absolutely necessary to carry a ridge 250 yards away to set up a relatively short shot to a protected green. They'll be hitting the ball well over 300 yards there.

Holes 9 and 18 will be pivotal. Of course. In preparation for the Open, the USGA put in new tees on these parallel, dogleg-left holes, lengthening each by over 50 yards. There's no

room for error off either tee; let the ball wander to the right and the fairway will kick it into the rough. Go too far left and it'll be blown into jail amid the brambles and hay. And the greens are the most difficult on the course. These are two great finishing holes.

Shinnecock Hills is the first U.S. Open course I have played. I

didn't shoot par. After playing par through two holes, I somehow managed to finish at 83, 13 over par. It's not that I didn't play some good holes. I parred the 456-yard 6, the hardest hole on the course, and I parred the 2 home holes, 9 and 18. You can imagine, as I did, the crowd ringing the greens, cheering wildly one second, hushed the next.

There are demanding golf holes here, but it is the mark of a great course that good shots will be rewarded. Shinnecock Hills merely demands the best golf you can play. —David Granger

BOOKS

W.P. KINSELLA, THE SUPER-NATURAL



Take Major League Baseball's *Game of the Week*, add the legends of Cochise and set it in *The Twilight Zone*, and you'll have some inkling of the character of *The Iowa Baseball Confederacy*, the latest novel by W.P. Kinsella. The new book, published by the Houghton Mifflin Co., is Kinsella's first since his highly acclaimed *Shoeless Joe* and establishes Kinsella as today's top baseball fiction writer.

His achievements are remarkable in that he is Canadian born and bred. They are doubly remarkable because not only has he never played hardball, but Kinsella, 51, never saw a major league game until he turned 30.

His late baseball start was due in part to his upbringing in rural Alberta. "It was so isolated where we lived, even the Indians couldn't find us," he recalls. "I had to entertain myself, so I created imaginary friends." Kinsella's imagination works overtime in *The Iowa Baseball Confederacy*. He weaves myth, magic and major league baseball while following the adventures of Gideon Clarke, a modern-day Iowa history instructor. Gideon has inherited his father's obsession: to prove that in 1908 an all-star team from the IBC, a country hardball league, took on the world champion Chicago Cubs in a marathon 2,614-inning game ending in an apocalyptic flood—events lost to the modern world through a crack in time.

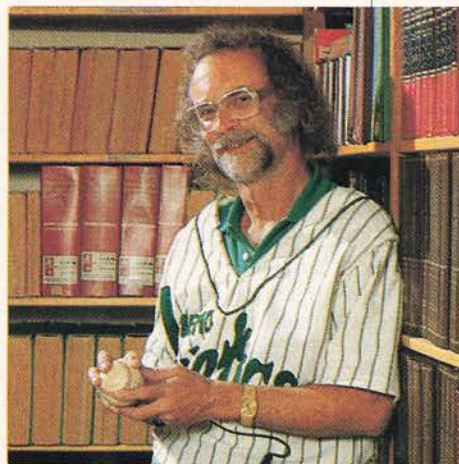
Gideon finds his proof, after a fantastic journey in which he encounters Teddy Roosevelt, Leonardo da Vinci, a mythical Indian warrior and, of course, the legendary 1908 Cubs. With dazzling imagery, Kinsella explores the subtleties of the game ("It's the only thing the white man did right," the Indian tells Gideon) and turn-of-the-century small town America.

Kinsella has little literary interest in other sports; almost unpatriotically for a Canadian, he disdains hockey. "It's degenerated to the level of pro wrestling," he says. "All they do is beat each other over the head with a stick." He finds other sports "doubly enclosed: first, by the boundaries of the playing field, then by time, which makes it very hard for mythological figures to be involved in those small confines," he says. "But baseball has no time limits, and the foul lines diverge forever."

"It's a dreamy kind of game...the chess of sports."

After high school, Kinsella spent nearly two decades working a series of "vile jobs"—from selling insurance to managing a pizza parlor—and raising a family. At age 35 he entered college, and a few years later he began writing full-

Baseball's newest bard, Kinsella combines fantasy, history and the 1908 Cubs.



time—when he wasn't hacking a cab.

Over the last decade he has published 10 books, including a highly popular series of Indian tales. Although he says he doesn't believe the magic he describes—"I'm just a storyteller"—Kinsella concedes that he is intrigued by the notion of "simultaneous dimension," that is, that people may exist in more than one life at a time. "That way," explains the man who was always chosen last in softball and rudely dumped in deepest right field, "somewhere, somehow, I could be a major league ballplayer."

—Sheldon Sunness



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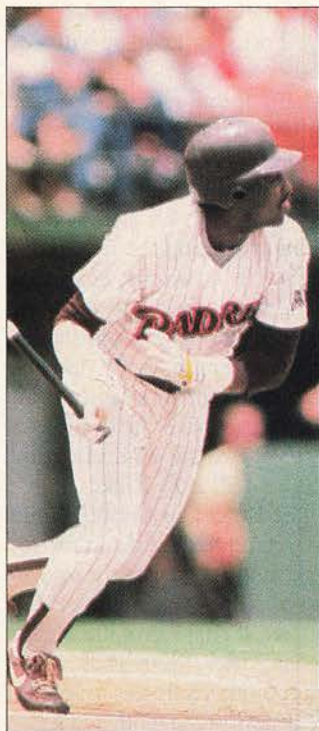
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1. Which major league player was once drafted by an NBA team?



a. Tony Gwynn



b. Dave Kingman



c. Tim Wallach



d. Darryl Strawberry

2. Name the current major league manager who hit a home run in his first big league at-bat as a player for the team he now manages.

3. Only one pitcher in modern major league history has fanned 300 or more batters in a single season and failed to win the strikeout title that year. Who is he?

- a. Steve Carlton
- b. Tom Seaver
- c. Vida Blue
- d. Nolan Ryan

4. The player who was on base when Hank Aaron hit home run number 715 in 1974 is still active. Name him.

5. Who said, "Baseball is the only game left for people. To play basketball now, you have to be seven-foot-six. To play football, you have to be the same width"?

- a. Graig Nettles
- b. Frank Layden
- c. Bill Veeck
- d. John Madden

6. Name the two current NBA coaches who were drafted as players by the teams they now coach.

7. Only three teams have ever led the NFL in rushing without having one of their players win a league rushing title. Name them.

8. Match the player with the feat he was the first in major league history to accomplish.

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| a. George Bradley | 1. a batting title |
| b. Ty Cobb | 2. a no-hitter |
| c. Roscoe Barnes | 3. a triple crown |
| d. John Doyle | 4. a pinch hit |

9. The New York Yankees and the Philadelphia-Oakland A's are the only major league franchises that have won two or more consecutive world championships more than once. Four other franchises have won back-to-back championships, but each has done so only once. Name them.

10. Since expansion in 1969, one major

league team holds the dubious distinction of having lost 100 or more games in a season four times. Name the team.

11. Last season, Pete Rose whacked a single off of pitcher Eric Show of the Padres to break Ty Cobb's career record of 4,191 base hits. Against which hurler, in 1963, did Rose record his first major league hit?

- a. Jim Bunning
- b. Bob Friend
- c. Al Jackson
- d. Don Drysdale

THE STUMPER

Orel Hershisser of the Dodgers and Kirk McCaskill of the Angels have both played professional hockey. Another current major-leaguer is the nephew of Tony Leswick, the former Detroit Red Wing who was the last player to score a Stanley Cup-winning goal in a seventh-game overtime period (1954). Name the player.

Answer the Stumper and win a SPORT T-shirt. In case of a tie, we'll draw three winners. The Stumper answer will appear next month; other answers are on page 69. Send postcards only (with T-shirt size) to SPORT Quiz, 119 West 40th Street, N.Y., N.Y. 10018, by June 20.

Death of a baseball salesman.

My friend Rick said he didn't like baseball. I shouldn't have let that bother me, but I did. When someone tells me that he doesn't like baseball, a nerve ending crackles deep inside me and I react.

My friend Rick is a devout Republican. When I tell him that I don't like politics, he is scornful, but he does not insist that I join him at a campaign dinner. Similarly, when Rick tells me that he doesn't like baseball, there is no need to insist that he join me at Shea Stadium. But I did.

Because, like others I know, I am a baseball salesman. The game has provided me with untold hours of pleasure and I am apparently unable to understand how a friend can live a full and satisfying life without it. My own fascination with the game compels me to convince the skeptical and the uninitiated. And so I deemed it important to sell baseball to Rick.

Rick, I determined, was an excellent prospect. He is an avid fly fisherman; fly fishing, not unlike baseball, is a sport of finesse and patience. Rick is a keen chess player; chess, not unlike baseball, is a game of silent strategies. Rick is a Catholic convert; in his conversion to baseball, he would embrace the game's ritual and tradition. Yes, Rick was an excellent prospect.

Rick and I take our seats behind third base at Shea Stadium on a Monday night in April. My mission has not been blessed with ideal conditions. It is damp and chilly and the Mets are hosting the no-name Pirates. The pitching matchup is Aguilera vs. McWilliams, hardly glamorous. But no matter, because the game is the thing, and I will be able to show it to Rick in ways he has never seen. And, oh, what a game we get.

Top of the third, Pirates lead 2-0. Two outs, Johnny Ray on first, Sid Bream at the plate, 3-2 pitch. Ray takes off, Bream lines a shot down the first base line, Darryl Strawberry fields the ball and fires home. It's an ideal one-hop throw. Gary Carter positions himself perfectly on the third base line, blocking Ray's outstretched foot just off the front of the plate

as he makes the tag. Out. End of inning.

It happens in 10 seconds, but there is so much to tell, so much to explain to Rick: why a runner goes on 3-2, the value of the one-hop throw, the difficulty of blocking a runner while making a catch and tag. I convey these things to Rick with a fervor appropriate for a spectacular play.

Rick nods politely, then shakes his head. "Why in the world," he says, "would anyone want to play catcher?"

Bottom of the third, two out, Keith Hernandez on first, 0-2 to Carter. I tell

Bottom of the eighth, Pirates lead 4-2, George Foster at the plate with two outs, nobody on. On a 2-2 pitch, Foster looks at what appears to be a strike but is called a ball. Pirates reliever Cecilio Guante is angry, then throws ball four. Mets manager Dave Johnson allows right-handed Ray Knight to hit against right-hander Guante, bucking the lefty-righty odds. Knight hits a two-run homer. So much to tell: the umpire and his strike zone, a pitcher riled, the walk that haunts, the lefty-righty dilemma—and a tie game.

I am gushing as I attempt to fill Rick's head with the beauties of baseball. "What kind of a name is Guante?" asks Rick.

The Pirates go ahead 5-4 on a two-out squeeze bunt in the top of the ninth. I explain the squeeze and also its cousin, the suicide squeeze. "That seems like kind of a cheap trick," says Rick.

Len Dykstra singles to lead off the bottom of the ninth and Kevin Mitchell sacrifices him to second. I turn to Rick to explain the sacrifice bunt but choke on my words when I see that he's looking at his watch. Tim Teufel doubles to tie the game. Hernandez walks. Righthander Jim Winn comes in to face Carter. The crowd is on its feet. Base hit. Mets win 6-5.

The crowd is screaming. I look at Rick. He is grinning at the crowd, then turns to me and says, "Great game." But his eyes aren't jumping like mine and his voice doesn't sound hoarse like mine.

By the time we reached the parking lot that night I was comfortable with the conclusion that I had failed (and Rick put the wrap on it with his closing comment: "All things considered, I'd rather clean fish"). I had not been able to sell Rick on baseball because baseball isn't a game to be sold. It's a process that most always begins in the child and grows like the bones. Its nuances, rhythms and charms are learned over many, many games. It can't be taught in a night. Baseball makes a fool of the baseball salesman who forgets that the game isn't measured in innings, it's measured in years.

Sorry, Rick, you'll just have to live without it. ★

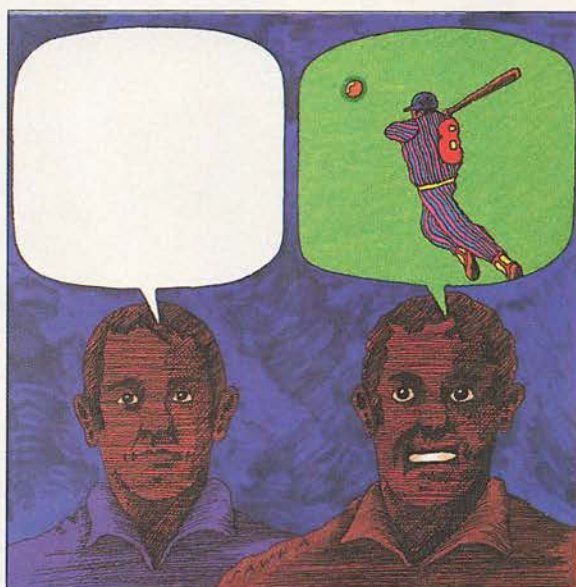


ILLUSTRATION BY JAN SAWKA

Rick that I think Carter has made himself into one of the best two-strike hitters in the game. Ball one. Ball two. Ripped foul. Ball three. *Boom.* Home run over the left field fence on a good, low fastball. Tie game, 2-2. Magnificent piece of hitting. "Why," says Rick over the roar of the crowd, "don't they have any seats in the outfield here?"

As the night gets colder, the game heats up. Tonight's crowd is not a big one but a dedicated one; by the seventh inning, fans have descended from the upper reaches and, like hunters to a campfire, have gathered nearer home plate. Rick returns from the concession stand and I note with dismay that he is warming himself over a Styrofoam cup of coffee. I cannot recall ever drinking a cup of coffee at a baseball game and I smell failure—Rick, I fear, isn't buying. But there is hope; the game gets better.



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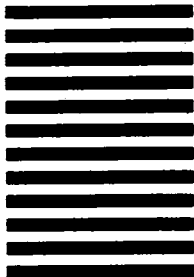
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